

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **RINGMER COMMUNITY COLLEGE**

Lewes

LEA area: East Sussex

Unique reference number: 114593

Headteacher: Ms K E Stonier

Lead inspector: Mrs S D Morgan

Dates of inspection: 15<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> November 2004

Inspection number: 272045

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive  
School category: Community  
Age range of students: 11-16  
Gender of students: Mixed  
Number on roll: 891

School address: Lewes Road  
Ringmer  
Lewes  
East Sussex  
Postcode: BN8 5RB

Telephone number: 01273 812220  
Fax number: 01273 813961

Appropriate authority: The governing body  
Name of chair of governors: Mr D Collins

Date of previous inspection: February 1999

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Ringmer is a comprehensive community college of average size. It has 891 students on roll in Years 7 to 11, with similar numbers of boys and girls, although three year groups have slightly more boys. The college takes its students from a wide area both rural and urban, which has a mixture of privately owned and social housing. Students' attainment on entry shows some fluctuation year-on-year, but overall is average. The percentage of students who are known to be eligible for free school meals, at just over three per cent, is below the national average. Almost 23 per cent of students have been identified as having special educational needs, which is slightly above the national average. These students have a range of needs, with most having learning, emotional and behavioural difficulties. The proportion of students with a statement of special educational need is above average. Almost all students are white British, with small numbers from a range of other ethnic groups. No students are at an early stage of speaking English as an additional language.

Ringmer has Technology college status and is oversubscribed. It has received a number of awards, including the Artsmark, schools achievement award and Investors in People status. The college has well-established provision for community and adult education.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
1355	Mrs S D Morgan	Lead inspector	
32670	Mr G Saltmarsh	Lay inspector	
24142	Mrs S Argyle	Team inspector	English
1503	Mr T Browne	Team inspector	Mathematics
33651	Mr R Turner	Team inspector	Science
32785	Dr W Allt	Team inspector	Information and communication technology (ICT), Business ICT
2501	Ms R Allison-Smith	Team inspector	Art and design
32590	Mr R Fenwick	Team inspector	Design and technology, Workplace learning
17808	Mrs S Orpin	Team inspector	Geography
27226	Mr R Cribb	Team inspector	History, physical education
2496	Dr A O'Sullivan	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
20767	Mr J Royle	Team inspector	Music
19352	Ms K Campbell-Platt	Team inspector	Religious education, special educational needs
15075	Mr B Stephens	Team inspector	Citizenship

The inspection contractor was:

**e-Qualitas Limited**

Langshaw  
 Pastens Road  
 Limpsfield Chart  
 Oxted  
 Surrey  
 RH8 0RE

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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

**Ringmer Community College is providing a satisfactory education for its students.** The college is oversubscribed. GCSE results have been consistently well above the national average. Students achieve well in their studies but unsatisfactorily in aspects of their personal development. Overall, the ethos of the college is satisfactory, as is the quality of teaching and learning. Leadership and management of the college are satisfactory. Senior managers have sought to improve achievement through a number of developments. However, these are not yet fully embedded in the day-to-day management of the college. The college provides satisfactory value for money.

The college's main strengths and weaknesses are

- GCSE results have been well above average for a number of years. In 2003 students' achieved very well in relation to their prior attainment and the most recent results are similar
- Unsatisfactory behaviour is not managed firmly and consistently by those with a leadership role, to ensure that students learn well in all lessons and take responsibility for their actions around the college buildings and site
- Provision in art and design and music is very good. However, standards in religious education throughout the college and information and communication technology (ICT) and geography in Years 10 and 11 are not high enough
- Despite efforts to overcome deficiencies the quality of accommodation is poor
- The college provides very good opportunities for students to take part in activities outside of lessons and has very good links with the community and other schools and colleges

**Overall, satisfactory improvement has been made since the last inspection.** The quality of teaching has been maintained and students achieve well in examinations. Almost all of the weaknesses identified have been tackled systematically. However, statutory requirements for the teaching of religious education in Years 10 and 11 and a daily act of collective worship are not met fully and the co-ordination of literacy development across the curriculum has not been improved.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

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

**Overall, students achieve well.** However, the unsatisfactory behaviour of some students limits both their achievement and that of others in a significant minority of lessons.

Results in the 2003 national tests at the end of Year 9, were in line with the national average. Students achieved better than might have been expected in relation to their previous results in mathematics and much better in science. They achieved as well as expected in English. Overall, results were above those of similar schools. The trend of improvement is below that nationally due to a dip in results in 2003. Current standards are average and students are achieving satisfactorily, overall. However, in religious education students' achievement is unsatisfactory.

GCSE results have continued to rise at a rate faster than that seen nationally. In 2003 they were well above the national average. Students achieved much better than might have been expected in relation to their previous results. The most recent results show further improvement. Current standards are above average and students are achieving well overall. However, standards are not high enough in geography and GCSE applied ICT. Students do not study religious education in Years 10 and 11, and so this statutory requirement is not met. Students following vocational courses achieve satisfactorily.

The unsatisfactory attitudes and behaviour of some students let them down and so students' personal development is unsatisfactory. **Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory overall.** Attendance is above average but punctuality to lessons is unsatisfactory.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

**The college is providing a satisfactory education for its students.**

**The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory, with strengths in Year 11.**

Teachers have good subject knowledge and prepare students well for examinations. Teaching is very good in art and design and good in a number of subjects. In some subjects it is satisfactory, with staff having to work very hard to manage the behaviour of a minority of students in too many lessons. This slows down the learning of the whole class and results in some individual lessons being unsatisfactory. Teaching is unsatisfactory in geography in Years 10 and 11 because it is too inconsistent and work is not always pitched at the correct level. In the best lessons teaching is lively and students encouraged to think for themselves and be active learners, relationships are good and time used productively. Assessment procedures are satisfactory although not yet consistent between subjects.

The curriculum is satisfactory overall, despite the lack of religious education in Years 10 and 11. Strengths include the introduction of vocational courses and a very good extra-curricular enrichment programme. Accommodation is poor. Good systems are in place for students' pastoral guidance and support. Links with parents are good and they are very good with the community and other schools and colleges.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

**Leadership and management are satisfactory.** Leadership has a clear vision for the college's future development with a focus on improving learning and achievement. However, leadership at all levels has not been effective in enabling staff to deal consistently with unsatisfactory behaviour in some lessons and around the college. Governance is satisfactory. Whilst governors support the college and are involved in setting its educational direction they have not challenged it effectively on key issues such as behaviour and not ensured that all statutory requirements are met.

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

A number of parents who attended the meeting prior to the inspection and who responded to the questionnaire were negative about aspects of the college's work. In particular, they expressed concern over the behaviour of some students, changes in staff and leadership and management. Students also expressed concern over issues such as behaviour and bullying. Inspection evidence supports the views of parents and students on issues related to behaviour.

## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

The most important things the college should do to improve are

- Improve attitudes and behaviour, both in lessons and around the college

- Improve standards in geography and GCSE ICT in Years 10 and 11
- Improve the quality of accommodation

and, to meet statutory requirements

- Provide for religious education in Years 10 and 11 and a daily act of collective worship



## PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS

#### Standards achieved in subjects and courses

In national tests at the end of Year 9, results have shown improvement but this has been slower than that found nationally due to a dip in results in 2003. GCSE results have improved at a faster rate than that found nationally. Students' attainment on entry to the college is average. Their achievements are good overall and by Year 11 standards are generally above average.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students do well in GCSE, overall results being well above the national average
- In the 2003 national tests at the end of Year 9 and at GCSE, students did very well in relation to their prior attainment
- Currently students' achievements are good overall, but, in a significant minority of lessons, unsatisfactory behaviour results in underachievement
- Standards are not high enough in ICT and geography in Years 10 and 11 and in religious education
- Students' skills in language, literacy, and numeracy support their learning satisfactorily in other areas of the curriculum. However, there is no whole-college approach to the teaching of these skills to ensure that they are developed consistently

#### Commentary

1. Results in the 2003 national tests at the end of Year 9, were in line with the national average in mathematics and science and below average in English. Overall, results were above those of similar schools (schools in which students had gained similar results in their Year 6 tests). The trend of improvement is below that nationally due to a dip in results in 2003. The performance of girls was slightly better than that of boys.
2. Current standards in Years 7 to 9 are average in English and mathematics and above average in science. In art and design, modern foreign languages and music standards are above those expected. In all other subjects standards are average.
3. Students achieve satisfactorily, overall. They achieve very well in art and design and well in science, history, modern foreign languages, music and physical education. However, in religious education low expectations result in students making too little progress, particularly in Year 7. Students with special educational needs and those identified as gifted and talented also achieve satisfactorily.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	32.3 (34.2)	33.4 (33.3)
mathematics	34.5 (36.9)	35.4 (34.7)
science	33.6 (34.4)	33.6 (33.3)

*There were 190 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	65 (65)	52 (50)
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	91 (94)	91 (91)

Percentage of students gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	98 (96)	96 (96)
Average point score per student (best eight subjects)	39.2 (39.0)	34.7 (34.8 )

*There were 181 students in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

4. GCSE results have been well above the national average for the last four years. The most recent results show some further improvement, particularly in the proportion of students gaining at least five A\* to G grades. In 2003, the proportion of students gaining five or more GCSE A\* to C grades was well above average. An average proportion gained five or more A\* to G grades. The proportion of students gaining one or more A\* - G grades was well above average. Students did best in English literature and French, and least well relative to their performance in other subjects in English language, geography and mathematics. Over the last three years, boys' and girls' results have been well above average and the trend of improvement has been above that nationally. Students achieved very well in relation to their performance in national tests at the end of Year 9.
5. Current standards in Years 10 and 11 are above average, overall and students achieve well. They achieve well in art and design, mathematics, science, design and technology, history, modern languages, music and physical education. However, standards are not high enough in geography and ICT. In geography, staffing difficulties and some non-specialist teaching, together with a lack of opportunities for fieldwork and too little use of ICT result in students underachieving. In ICT, insufficient curriculum time is available to cover the requirements of the GCSE syllabus, and consequently students underachieve and results are very poor. Students do not study religious education in Years 10 and 11, so this statutory requirement is not met. A number of students now follow vocational courses and standards of work seen were in line with those expected, and students achieved satisfactorily. Students with special educational needs and those identified as gifted and talented achieve well.
6. Throughout the college students achieve less well than they should in some lessons because unsatisfactory behaviour disrupts learning. This affects whole classes and not just those who are misbehaving, and limits the progress that students make over time.
7. As they progress through the college, students' language and literacy skills develop satisfactorily and are average. Students' competence in mathematics and their ICT skills support their learning satisfactorily in other areas of the curriculum. However, there is no whole-college approach to the teaching of these skills to ensure that they are developed consistently.
8. No students are at an early stage of English language acquisition. The very few students in the college without English as a home language achieve in line with their peers.

### **Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities**

A significant number of students display an unsatisfactory attitude towards the college, its staff and to each other. Their general behaviour in and around the college is also unsatisfactory. Attendance is good but students' punctuality at the start of lessons is unsatisfactory. Overall, provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Overall, students' attendance at the college is good
- Some students display an indifferent attitude towards the college and what it has to offer
- Most students want to work and learn, but the behaviour of a significant minority impedes learning in lessons and tends to disrupt life around the college
- A number of students and their parents have expressed reservation and concern regarding behaviour and its management

- Valuable lesson time is lost due to the lack of punctuality of some students
- Music and art play a significant role in students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The lack of religious education in Years 10 and 11 has a negative impact on students' spiritual development

**Commentary**

9. The level of attendance by students at the college is good and in many cases very good. This is particularly notable given the large catchment area served by the college and the long journeys some students have to make on every college day.

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

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	6.6	School data	0.1
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.*

**Ethnic background of students**

**Exclusions in the last school year**

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of students on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	828	99	3
White – Irish	3		
White – any other White background	19		
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	1		
Mixed – White and Black African	3		
Mixed – White and Asian	10	2	1
Mixed – any other mixed background	13	3	
Chinese	2		
Any other ethnic group	3		
Information not obtained	9		

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

10. Standards in attitudes and behaviour have declined since the last inspection. Overall, they are unsatisfactory and have a negative impact on many aspects of college life. This lack of acceptable levels of behaviour is recognised not only by students and staff but by many parents. Most students are positive about their life and work in the college and appreciate the many opportunities on offer. However, both teachers and students show frustration when teaching is disrupted by a minority of disaffected students.
11. In lessons, attitudes and behaviour noticeably improve when teaching is good. Students will particularly respond well when expectations are high and are coupled with teaching that engages them with flair and imagination. Their enthusiasm and willingness to involve themselves was particularly apparent in art and design and dance. During discussions with students a number commented that the management of behaviour by some staff was

ineffective and inconsistent and that, as a consequence, the college lacked a cohesive approach when discipline broke down.

12. It was apparent that standards in attitudes and behaviour rapidly declined in dull lessons or where some inexperienced or temporary staff were teaching. Some students deliberately and provocatively sought to test the boundaries of teachers' tolerance as they attempted to teach. On occasions behaviour outside the classroom was unsatisfactory, with students pushing and shoving their way along corridors. Given the large numbers traversing confined areas, due to building work taking place on the site, there is a heightened risk of an accident arising from such behaviour.
13. Overall, there was a distinct lack of basic courtesy from too many students, whether towards each other or to adults at or visiting the college. Parents and some students expressed concerns over poor behaviour after college. However, at the end of the college day inspectors found that the management of students getting onto buses was well organised. Student exclusions from the college were found to have been imposed for appropriate reasons and proportionate to the lapse in behaviour. The procedures for exclusion were found to have been correctly applied.
14. Incidents of bullying are an issue and many parents and students drew the situation to the attention of the inspectors both in their questionnaire responses and during discussions. The college recognises that bullying and the harassment of some students is a challenge and strives to deal with the problem in a variety of ways. A clear anti-bullying policy is in place and the phenomenon is discussed at assembly and through such activities as drama. Posters around the college encourage students to report their concerns and there are a variety of ways open for them to do this. Students do agree that the college does try to deal effectively with individual cases when reported.
15. Thirty one students are identified as having special behavioural needs. However, the extent to which class teachers use strategies to meet the needs of these students is variable across subject departments. This results in some students being off task and sometimes being removed from classrooms to work in the learning support unit. The newly formed inclusion unit provides a satisfactory system for identifying students' needs, monitoring their progress and providing intervention to support them.
16. The rate of attendance at the college has been consistently above the national average and the rate of unauthorised absence at the college is below the national average. Punctuality at the start of the college day is generally good but is unsatisfactory during the day with some students often turning up for lessons after they have started. This results in some disruption and the loss of valuable teaching time.
17. Overall, provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Opportunities for students' spiritual development in music are very good, and good in dance and history. There is no religious education in Years 10 and 11 and in many other subjects opportunities for spiritual development are not taken, and so overall provision is unsatisfactory.
18. Provision for students' moral development is satisfactory. In music and art, opportunities for moral development are very good and students behave very responsibly, use their initiative and work very well even without close supervision. Provision in dance and history are good and there are also opportunities in year form time for students to discuss moral and behavioural issues. Students are encouraged to think of others by raising substantial sums of money for charities. However, in many subjects moral development does not feature prominently.

19. The college provision for students' social development is good. Students develop good social and collaborative skills in many lessons. Opportunities in music are excellent, very good in art and good in modern foreign languages, physical education, dance, history and science. Students with special educational needs also have good opportunities, which develop their self-esteem. The college council and year committees and wide range of posts of responsibility in Year 11 offer very good opportunities for the development of social skills. Many students are proud of their college and are eager to take up the opportunities and responsibilities on offer to them by participating in the many activities, clubs and residential trips. However, some do not understand or care about the importance of living in a community. Most students value the chance to make their opinions known and the views of the effective student council are heard and acted upon.
20. Provision for cultural development is good. There are excellent opportunities for understanding different cultures in music, where students experience music from all over the world and a large number of students take part in music trips abroad. The cultural provision in art and design is very good and it is good in modern foreign languages, dance and history. Some charity work in the college also offers very good opportunities for cultural development.

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided by the college is satisfactory. Teaching and learning are satisfactory, as is the curriculum. The quality of learning resources is satisfactory and staffing is good. However, accommodation is poor. The college takes satisfactory measures to ensure students' care welfare and health and safety. Good arrangements are in place for pastoral guidance and support and the college has a good partnership with parents. Links with other schools, colleges and the community are very good.

### Teaching and learning

Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory as are assessment procedures.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have good subject knowledge and prepare students well for examinations
- Teaching is very good in art and design and good in history, modern foreign languages, music and physical education
- Overall, teaching is good in meeting the needs of students with special educational needs
- In too many lessons teachers have to work very hard to manage the behaviour of a minority of students. This slows down the learning of the whole-class and results in some lessons being unsatisfactory
- Teaching is unsatisfactory in geography in Years 10 and 11
- The quality of feedback to students on their work is not consistent

#### Commentary

##### *Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 124 lessons*

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0 (0%)	25 (20.2%)	55 (44.4%)	33 (26.6%)	10 (8.0%)	1 (0.8%)	0 (0%)

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

21. The quality of teaching and learning is very similar to that reported at the time of the previous inspection. The quality of teaching observed varied between year groups. The most effective teaching was seen in Year 11 and the weakest teaching in Year 7. Careful scrutiny of students' work indicated that teaching and learning over time is satisfactory. Teaching was at least satisfactory in almost all subjects. It was very good in art and design and good in history, modern foreign languages, music and physical education. Teaching was unsatisfactory in geography in Years 10 and 11.
22. In their responses to questionnaires a high proportion of students expressed the view that they were expected to work hard and do their best. However, a significant number of parents who attended the meeting held prior to the inspection mentioned concerns about behaviour in lessons, and in discussions students also said that behaviour in some lessons is poor. Evidence gathered during the inspection supports their views. Considerable time is taken, in too many lessons, managing the behaviour of a minority of students. This slows down the learning of other students and results in some lessons being unsatisfactory. Problems with discipline are not always dealt with firmly and consistently by those with leadership responsibilities and teaching staff.
23. Teachers have good subject knowledge and prepare students well for examinations. In the most effective lessons they discuss examination technique and how to gain marks which helps students do well in their GCSEs. In the best science lessons, teachers structure their lessons well and are enthusiastic. They are keen for students to succeed and give their

time freely both during and after the college day, with catch-up and revision sessions. Students feel confident to ask questions and develop their knowledge and understanding well. The technology status of the college has enabled some departments to develop good use of ICT. For example, in design and technology teachers use computer aided design effectively in Year 8 lessons. This enables teachers to set challenging tasks for higher-attaining students and enables students to produce drawings of good quality.

24. A common feature of good or very good lessons in subjects such as mathematics and history is the good use of starter activities, which engage students and stimulate their interest. For example, a Year 9 history lesson was based on role playing a recruitment tribunal where students debated who should be blamed for the failures in the Battle of the Somme. The lively approach motivated all students and was particularly successful in extending the knowledge and understanding of the highest-attainers.
25. Students respond well when they are encouraged to think for themselves, question and be active learners. In lessons with these features relationships are good and students settle to work quickly and use time productively. For example, in a Year 9 art and design lesson comments and suggestions were sought from students during a printing demonstration. Students were used to this approach and were keen to engage in discussion asking questions and listening carefully. When working individually they showed high levels of involvement and worked with a good degree of independence.
26. In other successful lessons very good relationships have been developed, which help students learn effectively. In a Year 10 lesson students studying for the Youth Award scheme worked together very well when completing timed tasks. The activities were planned very well and students received praise and support from the teacher which developed their confidence. The pace was brisk and the lesson enabled students to develop the ability to work co-operatively in pairs and groups.
27. In other good and very good lessons teachers show a high degree of enthusiasm for their subject. In the best music lessons, for example, short activities, delivered in a lively and stimulating manner, engage students' interest. In a Year 11 lesson a brain-storming session was very effective in helping students understand aspects of Indian music and the associated vocabulary. The students were keen to take part and were motivated by the approach.
28. Overall, teaching is good in meeting the needs of students with special educational needs. In the specialist lessons, teachers have high expectations of students; tasks and materials are modified to help them to access class work. The guidance provided by the teachers and learning support assistants results in students making very good progress in gaining literacy skills and completing classroom tasks. In the good or better lessons observed, class teachers use teaching methods which allowed all students to take part in the activities and learning; teachers were aware of students individual education plan targets and ensured that work was provided which was helpful in engaging and motivating them. However, there is a lack of consistency across the college in the extent to which teachers use the strategies noted in individual education plans to ensure that special educational needs students are able to access class work. In some lessons without additional support where several students have literacy or other needs, class teachers are not always able to give them the attention they need to get on with class work. The special educational needs co-ordinator, the literacy tutor and the team of learning support assistants have very good specialist knowledge and understanding of students learning difficulties and strategies for support them. However, the impact of the specialist teachers on the methods and

strategies used to support students with special educational needs in classrooms is yet to be fully developed.

29. The teaching of geography in Years 10 and 11 is unsatisfactory. Students' work shows that teaching and learning are inconsistent between classes. Currently, some classes are taught by non-specialists due to staffing difficulties, and work is not always pitched at the correct level to enable students to learn effectively. Although the new schemes of work are providing more consistent planning, which was apparent in lessons seen during the inspection students are very dependant on their teachers and are not learning to think for themselves.
30. In other lessons, where teaching was unsatisfactory or poor, teachers were not able to deal effectively with the disruptive behaviour of some students and this slowed down learning for the whole class. For example, in a Year 9 lesson students called out consistently and showed little respect for the teacher. Several students worked together at being disruptive by banging pencils on the bench. The teacher wrote students' names on the board but this had no effect and very little learning took place. In other lessons that were satisfactory, teachers had to work very hard to deal with a few disruptive students. This took up a too much time and slowed down learning. In too many lessons two or three students arrived late, often without explanation, and this again resulted in some disruption. Staff do not always follow college procedures for dealing with disruptive behaviour or lateness, and some do not appear to be fully aware of the action they should take.
31. Assessment is satisfactory overall, although not yet consistent between subjects. Assessment is very thorough and constructive in art and design and design and technology where it contributes significantly to students' achievement. In history and modern languages the students receive helpful feedback. Assessment is unsatisfactory in geography and inconsistent within English. Art and design and modern languages have good systems that show students how they can improve, but students generally are yet to become involved in rigorous self-assessment. The college analyses examination data thoroughly, with careful checking of the value being added by subjects, usefully breaking this down to compare performance according to gender or ability. Such analysis has yet to be fully used in all subjects. In mathematics for example, tracking the progress of individual students is being introduced currently to help improve provision. An appropriate college priority is to improve assessment so as to support students in their learning.
32. The assessment of students with special educational needs is very good. The liaison with primary schools and clear procedures for identifying and assessing needs across the college years are strengths of the learning support unit. Good liaison takes place between pastoral tutors and year heads to track students' progress against targets and to identify changing needs. The requirements of the Code of Practice are met and reviews of the progress made by students with statements which involve parents and students are held regularly. Regular reviews of other special needs students in relation to their IEP targets, also take place.

### **The curriculum**

The quality of the curriculum is satisfactory. Extra-curricular provision is very good. Staffing is good and learning resources are satisfactory. The quality of accommodation is poor and does not provide a suitable learning environment for a number of subjects.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Opportunities for enrichment are very good and student participation in extra-curricular activities high
- Despite efforts to overcome deficiencies the quality of accommodation is poor



- Well-planned schemes of work for some subjects help students learn effectively, although the plans in other subjects are less effective
- A few classes are shared between two teachers which makes learning more difficult for students
- New ideas for the curriculum are helping to make learning more interesting and relevant for students
- Current staffing levels and subject expertise are good
- The college is failing to meet requirements to teach religious education to students in Years 10 and 11 and to provide a daily act of collective worship

### **Commentary**

33. The college timetable ensures that taught lesson time meets the nationally recommended figure of 25 hours. However, a few classes are shared between two teachers, for example in English and geography and there is too little time available for citizenship, with the consequence that it is difficult for teachers to know their classes and the continuity of work is sometimes affected adversely. Despite the constraints of accommodation and part-time teachers, the timetable is satisfactory and minimises the number of difficulties.
34. Students in Years 10 and 11 are offered a wide range of GCSE courses and there are newly developed vocational routes established, which a small number of students now follow. However, there is no religious education studied in Years 10 and 11 and the allocation of time for the GCSE ICT course is too short for students to fully cover the examination syllabus. The programme of work related learning (WRL) is developing in a satisfactory way and there are good plans for the future.
35. The planning for some subjects, such as science is well written and ensures that the syllabus is covered effectively. However, in other subjects, such as mathematics curriculum planning is not developed sufficiently. Generally, there is a good variety in courses offered, for example, yoga and dance in physical education, good extension activities in mathematics and the development of personal study skills in science.
36. As a consequence of gaining specialist status as a Sustainable Technology College, the college is improving environmental awareness through the Eco group and developing students' understanding and awareness through providing good opportunities for active citizenship, for example through the Junior Sports Leadership Scheme. The college is forward thinking and is developing a range of new ideas to help make students learning more interesting and relevant. For example, in Year 7, students are being helped to develop their study skills and their ability to think for themselves, while more generally in art and design, teachers are using more innovative ways of working.
37. The provision made for students with special educational needs is good overall, with the specialist provision being very good. A good focus is placed on adding to the external support provided by local education authority services, for example, through a programme which helps students with speech and communication difficulties to develop the social use of language. Some students spend a significant part of their college day in the learning support unit for one-to-one or small group teaching with limited access to the broad range of curricular activities. Most of these students benefit from the very good efforts made by the college to include students with more severe learning difficulties by providing appropriately personalised provision. This includes both the main college curriculum and other activities such as horse riding and gardening. Overall, there is a lack of a whole-college approach to modifying and adapting materials and resources to match the needs of special needs students across subject departments.
38. A well-planned programme for personal, social, and health education is in place. The programme is co-ordinated well although teaching in tutorial time is variable. In the best

lessons, students gain much from considering others' views and debating what they believe and why. The programme is organised well by heads of year and is enhanced well through the regular use of visitors, videos and interesting activities.

39. Good links are in place with primary schools, through subjects such as mathematics, science, design and technology and physical education, which help students transfer between schools and helps them to be better prepared in these subjects.
40. A very good range and variety of extra-curricular activities is provided and a very high number of students participate before college, at lunchtime and after college. The commitment of staff to providing these opportunities is outstanding. A very good variety of sports activities and team games is very well attended. The provision of a wide range of activities in music is a particular strength. In art, there are visits to galleries that are closely linked to students' studies and therefore impact positively on motivation and achievement. There are opportunities in all subjects and additional activities include residential and holiday programmes, trips abroad, fishing trips, theatre groups, public speaking, productions, family literacy, and expeditions for the Duke of Edinburgh Award. For all enrichment activities there are learning objectives and their success is carefully monitored and evaluated. Students also have extra-curricular activities organised in collaboration with other local colleges through the East Sussex partnership of specialist schools.
41. Improvement to the curriculum since the last inspection is satisfactory. For example, the timetable is now planned so that there is better time allocation for mathematics and physical education. However, statutory requirements for religious education in Years 10 and 11 are still not met.
42. The match of teachers' qualifications and experience to the demands of the curriculum is good. Although the college has had a significant number of staff changes current staffing levels and expertise are good. The majority of lessons are taught by teachers who are well qualified in the appropriate curriculum area delivering knowledge and skills with confidence. Students' understanding and progress are also well supported by the help of learning support assistants assigned to specific curriculum areas.
43. The quality of accommodation is poor. Much of the main college building dates back to the original school built in 1958. The college has grown in population since then and although adaptations and additions are continuing to be made, the accommodation is inadequate in a number of areas. Indoor sports facilities consist of an old small gym and poor changing rooms. There are no winter all-weather facilities for outdoor sports or floodlighting. The gymnasium has to be used for college examinations. This causes difficulties for the teaching of physical education and restricts community use. The accommodation for art and design is particularly grim because it is based in a very old outbuilding. The learning resources centre is used as a teaching room throughout the week, when others cannot use it as a quiet study area. The college is aware of the acute shortfalls in accommodation and has embarked on seeking support for new facilities. Teachers make the best of the accommodation by providing good displays of work and information boards. Maintenance staff keep the main areas well decorated but are struggling to keep on top of basic repairs because of the age and decline of the building. The college has temporary old and newer permanent buildings that are not connected by dry walkways, and the outdoor hard surface space is limited. Many rooms are too small and the main corridors are too narrow. There are lifts to provide disability access to the upper floors, but the main entrance has a series of steps that limits users with poor mobility to the rear and side entrances. The dining hall is too small and there are inadequate areas in which students can meet and socialise.

These factors significantly contribute towards students displaying unsatisfactory behaviour around the site.

44. Resources are satisfactory in most areas. Specialist status funding has significantly helped the college to improve the level of resources. Improvement has been made in the availability of new ICT resources including laptops for flexible use. Where these resources have been made available teaching and learning has become more effective. Improvements are still needed in some subjects.

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

Arrangements to ensure the students' care, welfare, health and safety are satisfactory. The college provides its students with good support, advice and guidance, resulting in good achievement for the majority of students. The college involves students well by seeking their views on in its work and development and generally acting upon them.

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

- The college seeks the students' views well and acts on them so that they feel valued and able to bring about improvements to college life
- The college monitors students' academic progress well through its pastoral work and deals with the needs of students with academic, social, behavioural and emotional difficulties well through its counselling and mentoring work
- The college generally deals well with the care and welfare of students, having good child protection and well-organised first aid procedures
- Effective support is provided to help students settle in when they start at the college in Year 7, particularly from the trained Year 9 student group
- Monitoring of students' behaviour and systems for dealing with persistent disruption are unsatisfactory and students report that this does impact on their learning in several lessons
- A small but significant number of students report that bullying is still a problem for some students, even though it is often well dealt with by some teachers

#### **Commentary**

45. Students generally feel safe at college and have an adult that they know well to whom they can turn when they need support, usually their head of year or their tutor. They also have very good access to the college counsellor, Connexions team members, community health and youth workers. Key members of staff have good knowledge and training in welfare matters and are well supported by other people and agencies offering specialist advice and guidance. Secure procedures are in place for first aid and child protection. All staff receive good training in dealing with child protection issues. Internet security is satisfactory and protects students from access to inappropriate sites. New procedures to combat bullying are beginning to have a good impact. The students, whilst positive about the work to stop bullying, still spoke during the inspection of their concerns about specific instances. The inclusion unit plays an important role in supporting students during the college day. The college's formal policies and procedures for health and safety were recently reviewed by governors. During the inspection, some health and safety issues were raised with the college and these were dealt with promptly.

46. Good liaison and transfer arrangements with the twenty feeder primary schools help students in Year 7 to settle into the college well. Good procedures are in place to ensure that they are well known, particularly those with special educational needs. A good exchange of academic and pastoral information takes place between the schools and college.
47. Most students are pleased with the support and praise they receive from their teachers, particularly in Year 7 where the ACE reward system is used well. Although marking and comments from teachers in some subjects give students good help to improve their work, the quality of support varies considerably and in English, geography and religious education, it is not effective. The monitoring of and response to students' with behavioural difficulties is not consistent and this affects learning. The student log, 'passport to success', used in the inclusion centre, is a very effective way of monitoring progress. A well-planned scheme to monitor students' overall progress is in place. The self-evaluation file completed regularly within the year form time (YFT) provides a good record of each student's work. A series of interviews and regular random checks on students' progress sheets is well managed in most respects. Whilst this is very well structured, it does not rigorously track standards and give students enough information they need to help them improve their performance. Discussions, that take place with tutors and parents, give students a good opportunity to talk about their progress and parents have the opportunity to be involved in their child's education.
48. Students were involved well in the selection of the college council. This is made up of elected representatives from each year and involves them in the college's work and development well. The council is rightly proud of its contribution to charity fund raising activities. It has made a good contribution to developing the quality of catering and had an impact on the discussions relating to uniform. Representatives feel they have an effective voice and have raised concerns over behaviour, bullying and the state of the toilets that are now being addressed. Good projects to improve the areas around the college, such as the ECO project are supported well by students.

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

The college has good overall links with parents whose views are sought through questionnaires and meetings. Links with the local community are very good. Strong and positive links have been developed with other schools and colleges.

#### **Main strengths**

- Parents have well founded concerns about attitudes and behaviour
- Good channels for communication with parents are being established
- Some very good quality information is available for parents
- Very good links are in place with the local community which help to develop students learning and life skills
- Very good links with feeder primary schools and neighbouring colleges seek to provide consistent transition
- The college plays a key role in community education and leisure activities

#### **Commentary**

49. A significant number of parents have voiced concern regarding some key aspects of the college's provision. From a number of pre-inspection questionnaire responses it is apparent that some parents have lost confidence in its ability to manage unsatisfactory attitudes and behaviour. Other concerns relate to the perceived high turnover in staff, setting of homework and inconsistencies in teaching. Many parents who were supportive of much of the college's work showed their disquiet by attaching thoughtful and well argued notes to the questionnaire returns. Similar comments were also expressed by some parents at the pre-inspection parents meeting. Inspection evidence supports the views of parents on issues related to behaviour and its management.
50. The college has been working hard to improve links with parents and many recognise this. Target setting days, for example, are valued as an opportunity to review how well students are getting on. Good channels for consulting and communicating with parents and the

community have been established through the re-launch of the Friends of Ringmer College who amongst other fund raising events also help run the College Shop, provide refreshments at parent evenings, organise social events and support Arts Production evenings. Regular college newsletters are used well to celebrate success and announce developments so that parents can feel part of the college community. The college has created an informative website.

51. The college organises a large number of parent partnership events throughout the academic year. Induction, open evenings and mornings are often opened and introduced by the head boy and girl. Senior staff are always available to discuss any concerns with parents. The principal has initiated a parent surgery for parents and carers to come into the college by appointment to discuss and resolve any issues. The college makes use of questionnaires to parents to establish their views and why they chose it to provide their children's education.
52. Reports to parents on their children's progress provide clear statements on students' strengths, areas for improvement and targets in most subjects. These are complemented by two Progress Tracker reports across the year the last of which forms a component part of the end of year report. A progress file is also sent out at the end of each term which includes comments from form tutors and gives students the opportunity to set their own targets and comment upon their achievements. Reports are well set out in plain English. New homework diaries were produced in consultation with the Student Council and contained some good examples of college/parent communications which were noted during the inspection.
53. Very good links with the community enrich and strengthen learning and it is clear that the college is a component part of life in the area. Local residents are welcomed to the college; for example a recent Silver Surfers day meant that older residents could visit the college, lunch with the students and have an introduction to the use of personal computers. There are strong links with the local churches, the Parish Council and the business community. A well established and long standing association with nearby Glyndebourne thrives and they provide extra-curricular music workshops for students.
54. The college actively works in partnership with other schools. Links with colleges in the area are strong and collaborative. Effective links with the many feeder primary schools are particularly good and are designed to improve transition between Year 6 and 7. Year 7 and 8 students commented to inspectors on how quickly they had settled due to their familiarity with the college, some senior staff and teachers whom they had met whilst still at their primary school and on visits to the college. A typical example of the collaborative work the college does is the use of its library by primary school pupils who take part in organised sponsored reading and many other competitions. Authors visit the college to talk with the students.
55. The college adult learning courses provide a positive contribution to community education. A wide range of courses is on offer many of which can lead to vocational qualifications. The college is a leading partner in a consortium of adult learning colleges in the area which plans to widen the scope and availability of courses from September 2005.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

Leadership and management of the college are satisfactory, as is governance.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Leadership provides clear vision for future development

- Governors are actively engaged in supporting the college, but have not challenged it effectively on some key issues
- The senior leadership team is a cohesive and increasingly effective unit. However, those with a leadership role have not yet been effective in enabling all staff to deal with the unsatisfactory behaviour of some students
- Improved self-evaluation and monitoring are beginning to have an impact but are not yet fully embedded
- Increased delegation of management tasks has resulted in greater involvement of staff at all levels
- Financial management is very good and the application of best value principles is excellent

## Commentary

56. The principal was appointed with a mandate for change and provides sound leadership. Developments have taken place on a number of fronts in the last eighteen months. The principal has a clear vision for the future development of the college, which has involved a change in management culture to empower staff at a number of levels. An effective senior leadership team has been created which is leading change and development on key areas such as learning and teaching and the college's specialist status. Training and professional development have strengthened the skills of middle managers and the vision for the future is widely shared.
57. Governors have undertaken a major review of their role and are very supportive of the college, deploying their considerable expertise in its service. They have a good understanding of the college's strengths and weaknesses and are increasing their involvement in the day-to-day running of the college. However, they have failed to hold it to account on the key issues of challenging behaviour and non-compliance with statutory requirements for religious education and collective worship. Their understanding of some principles of inclusion, particularly relating to the provision of an orderly environment in which all students can learn and feel secure and in which parents can have confidence, require further development.
58. Leadership of senior staff is satisfactory, with developing strengths. Senior leaders have undertaken initiatives on key areas such as learning and teaching, the college's specialist status, community links, staff and partnership development and developing the role of year heads. Progress is evident on all these fronts. The leadership of middle managers has improved in response to training. Most subject departments are well led, with very good leadership in science, art, design and technology, history, modern languages and music. The leadership and management of the special needs department are good. They are providing clear direction to extend good practice in supporting students with special needs across the college. However, leadership of geography, ICT and religious education is unsatisfactory. Examples of good leadership from heads of year were seen. Many leaders provide very good role models for colleagues and students. The evidence of the inspection and comments from students and parents suggest that those with leadership responsibilities at all levels do not always provide sufficient presence around the college and manage the unsatisfactory behaviour of some students.
59. The five-year strategic plan for the college embraces much of the change and development expected from the new leadership team. The central focus on learning and teaching is being actively dealt with through improved self-evaluation, analysis of data and monitoring by senior and middle management. The effectiveness of addressing the targets of improving student motivation and involvement, the campus and communications outweigh current concerns about behaviour, accommodation and concerns expressed by some parents. Overall, progress on the plan is satisfactory.
60. The college sets its aims and ethos out clearly in its prospectus, with particular emphasis on inclusion. Many students achieve their potential in both academic and personal development, but current issues with the management of behaviour are impeding the achievement of key aims relating to the right to teach and learn in a secure and calm environment.
61. Management principles and practices are in process of change and development. There is good analysis of performance data. A system of departmental reviews has been set up. Examples of reviews seen ranged from good to satisfactory, as in some instances there was a lack of rigour linked to setting goals for improvement.

62. In terms of devolving more responsibility to the various levels of management and the effect this has had of empowering managers, good progress has been made. Management overall is satisfactory.
63. Performance management, seen as central to college development, is organised through clear links between senior managers, curriculum leaders and staff. Lesson observation by curriculum leaders has been effective in bringing about some improvements. However, the college recognises that there is still more to do. The college makes satisfactory provision for the continuing professional development of staff. Identified training needs are met, by experienced staff from the college, local education authority and through a partnership with other schools that form the East Sussex partnership of specialist schools. All newly appointed staff follow a good induction programme.
64. The college, as part of the local federation of schools and colleges, provides training for students on the graduate training programme, postgraduate and newly qualified staff.
65. The college is fully staffed having replaced several staff that left at the end of the summer term. In order to allow teachers to concentrate on raising standards several administrative tasks have been reassigned to non-teaching staff. These include cover for absent staff, financial and examination administration.
66. Financial planning and management are very good. The budget is well managed and the recent reduction in surplus was because of a strategic decision to invest in more learning support staff. The college's recent self-assessed audit identified a few minor issues which were quickly dealt with. The college monitors its financial management well through its involvement in local networks. Principles of best value are applied with great diligence and all staff are aware of the value of good resource management.
67. Since the last inspection, the college has changed considerably and the overall improvement is satisfactory. Standards have remained high. The change in leadership and management style has brought about many positive developments in a short time, but they have yet to realise their full impact.

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

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	3,486,772
Total expenditure	3,455,242
Expenditure per pupil	3,776

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	137,216
Balance carried forward to the next	31,529

**OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES**

**Work related learning (WRL)**

Provision in work related learning is satisfactory.

**Main strengths and weaknesses**

- New pathways 14-19 are being developed for students in partnership with local further education providers
- Most students continue in education after Year 11 on courses and training at further education colleges
- Students benefit from a well-organised work experience programme
- A good careers education and guidance programme is in place for all students
- Work related learning has not as yet been identified and promoted throughout the curriculum
- The development of work related learning has been slow because of staffing difficulties



## Commentary

68. Students' achievement has been unsatisfactory until recently, because of staffing difficulties in the co-ordination of work related learning. The curriculum is now developing and new opportunities for work-related learning are emerging. Students are able to benefit from a package of work related activities from tutor periods, through elements of the PSHE programme, and in a good work experience programme in Year 10. These activities allow students to take part in role-play to improve interview and telephone skills, understand health and safety issues in employment, and reflect on their future plans. These achievements have been enhanced for many students through the very good extra-curricular experiences such as taking part in the 'Green power car challenge' with the support of local engineers.
69. A good cohesive careers education and guidance programme is in place for all students throughout the college. This forms a good foundation in considering the relevance of specific skills and qualifications for careers, looking at choices and decision-making. In Year 10 the teaching concentrates on the work experience week. Year 11 students prepare themselves for post-16 education. In 2003 this resulted in most students continuing with full time education. A few students went directly into employment. A small number did not follow training or employment. A similar pattern was seen in 2004.
70. All students benefit from the applied GCSE in ICT that has elements of work related learning as part of the course. Students who study applied GCSE business studies have a vocational emphasis to their work. All students following GCSE food technology take a commercial food safety hygiene award. The college is developing access to a very good range of NVQ and Btech courses in partnership with a number of further education institutions. This provides students with good work related learning opportunities in agricultural, construction, catering, equine, engineering, business and service industries. Other than in these vocational subjects the curriculum does not currently have many references to work related learning.
71. Each year over 20 students are involved in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme and have progressed to silver and gold awards. This has provided these particular students with opportunities to develop new skills, take part in physical activities, and benefit from community service. A quarter of Year 10 students are following the Junior Sports Leader award scheme that requires students to run and organise community sports events. The college also has a successful Youth Awards Scheme involving one fifth of Year 10 and 11 students.
72. Students benefit from a well-organised week of work experience at the end of Year 10. Form tutors prepare students well for the week in business and ensure that their achievements are monitored during the placement. Students are required to complete tasks during the placement and follow this up through a debriefing day. Parents and students are involved in the process through information evenings before the placements. Health and safety issues have been highlighted well by a fashion show involving a fire officer to judge suitability for work wear.
73. Careers advice from the Connexions services is targeted at those at most at risk of not finding worthwhile employment or further education. The college has a good collection of careers guidance materials in the learning resources centre.
74. A member of the senior management team has taken over the management of the work related curriculum after a long period of staffing difficulties. The college has not as yet audited the requirements for work related learning against the many opportunities that

exist for learning about work, enterprise and employment. A good start has been made on forging new links through the staging of a business and community conference. The conference enlisted a team of learning mentors and extended the involvement of the business community within the college. Links have also been made through the Entrepreneurs for Tomorrow competition hosted at Sussex University.

## 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 satisfactory.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Average	Above average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Good
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Good

Leadership	n/a
Management	n/a
Progress since the last inspection	Satisfactory

##### Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE results have been consistently above average
- There is some underachievement of boys from Year 7 to Year 9
- Unsatisfactory behaviour and attitudes of some students affect the learning of others
- Teaching is good when the students are actively involved in the lesson
- New leadership has accurately identified departmental needs and good support from the local education authority is helping to raise standards
- Classrooms are cramped and inadequately soundproofed

##### Commentary

##### Examination results

75. Students enter the college with a wide range of prior attainment in English, but it is average overall. As at the last inspection, the pattern of results has followed quite closely the variations in students' attainment on admission to the college. Although there are an increasing number of higher-attaining students, more than one in four started the current Year 7 with standards that were below the national expectation.
76. By the end of Year 9 in 2003, overall results in the national tests were below average. Over one in four raised their standards by two levels but some students, mainly boys, made insufficient progress. Girls attained higher standards than boys and the difference was greater than seen nationally. Results have shown some deterioration since the last inspection and students did not do as well in English as in mathematics and science.
77. 2003 results in GCSE English Language were above the national average for both boys and girls and well above average in English Literature. Girls still did better than boys by attaining far more top grades. In 2004, English Language results improved further and the department's targets were exceeded. This year group had gained better results in their Year 9 national tests than previous years and they made significant progress by the end of Year 11.

##### Standards and achievement

78. Direct observation of lessons confirmed that standards of current students in Year 9 are average, with the standard of work of the higher-attaining students in the top set in Year 9 being high. The lowest-attaining students with learning difficulties are involved in special programmes of work and they achieve well as a result of the well-considered help they receive. Students in other classes, some identified as having special learning or emotional

needs, receive limited support but achieve satisfactorily. Students do not learn well enough when the work is not matched suitably to their needs. When they lose interest or are not completely involved, many students are quick to misbehave and prevent others from learning. Unsatisfactory attitudes and behaviour account for some underachievement, particularly amongst boys in Years 7 to 9. Standards seen in the current Year 11 are good overall but, for many, gaps in earlier learning remain. Many students find writing and organising their work difficult and are over-reliant on the teacher. The emphasis on the examination syllabus and examination techniques in Year 11 helps students to focus on their work. The highest-attaining students are taught separately and they achieve well. They are articulate and hard working and are approaching their examinations with confidence.

### **Teaching and learning**

79. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall with some unsatisfactory teaching in Years 7 and 8 and better teaching in Year 11. Teachers know the subject well and make considerable effort to prepare materials for lessons. Tasks designed for pair and group work allow students to share ideas, which they do well. Working in this way, they develop social skills of negotiation and respect for each others' opinions. In spite of this, some teachers are inclined to ask too little of the students. When this is the case, students become bored or passive and some are quick to misbehave. Students know their predicted levels and grades because teachers accurately assess their finished pieces of work. Nonetheless, there is a lack of consistency and regularity in marking students' notes and drafts and teachers' comments do not always tell students how to improve next time. Teachers give good immediate feedback in class, but opportunities are missed in some lessons to involve the students more in a close look at what is being assessed and how well that is reflected in their written work.

### **Leadership and management**

80. Staff changes left the department insecure and without permanent leadership for a year. New leadership has made a thorough and accurate assessment of departmental needs and ways forward. Areas for improvement have been identified, such as tackling boys' underachievement, changing teaching strategies to manage behaviour better and using more ICT in the lessons. The grouping of students for English, which parents say they find confusing, is under review. The department works as a team and is committed to raising standards but some delegated responsibilities need further clarity. Already new schemes of work have been produced for Years 7, 8 and 9 to ensure more consolidation of learning and better progression from one year to the next. Lessons have been monitored acknowledging individual teachers' strengths and areas where more effective practice is needed. Local education authority advisory staff are giving good additional support. Accommodation for teaching is cramped and poorly lit and noise travels readily between classrooms. Since the last inspection, results by the end of Year 9 show some decline to 2003, with an exception in 2002, and an encouraging slight upward turn in 2004. Good GCSE results have been maintained each year. Currently, a number of very good initiatives have been introduced. However, although many of these are already in place, it is too early, after less than a term, to judge their impact.

### **Literacy across the curriculum**

81. Standards achieved in reading and writing in subjects across the curriculum are average overall but cover a wide spectrum. Students speak confidently, particularly when answering questions in class, though less so when giving more formal presentations. Most students listen well to each other and make their points politely in class when behaviour is well

managed by the teacher. In some subjects, for example, art, history and design technology, students are encouraged to read widely around a subject and present their findings in well organised and evaluative writing. Students have occasional research and reading lessons in the learning resources centre which is well equipped with computers and adequately stocked with books, videos and other materials. The resource centre offers good support to students' learning during morning break, lunchtimes and after college. Its staff are welcoming and helpful and organise book weeks, visiting writers and competitions to encourage students to enjoy reading. However, the development of literacy provision across the college, a key issue in the last inspection, has not yet been addressed. There is no whole-college management to raise standards of literacy, no co-ordination of the work in different departments, no sharing of good practice, and no consistency in expectations of teachers in seeking ways to widen and improve styles of reading and writing in their subject.

## Drama

82. Two lessons of drama were sampled. In a Year 11 lesson, students achieved high standards of practical performance and worked well together with very good guidance from the teacher. However, the work of an observed Year 7 drama class was spoiled by continual disruption from a group of girls who refused to co-operate. GCSE drama is popular and many students take part in drama clubs and college performances. Results have been extremely varied. 34 per cent of the students attained grades A\*-C in 2003 which was well below the national average of 65 per cent, but results increased dramatically to 84 per cent in 2004. Girls do better than boys, especially in their written coursework. Accommodation for drama lacks adequate ventilation. Poor lighting and sound equipment means the department is unable to offer a technical drama option for GCSE. New leadership has identified well the current needs of the department and made a good start on improving provision.

### Modern foreign languages

Provision in modern foreign languages is good.

	Years 7, 8 and 9	Years 10 and 11
Standards	Above average	Above average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Good
Progress since the last inspection	Good

### Main strengths

- Results in French and German are above average. The most recent German results were outstanding
- Teaching is consistently good and students learn well as a result
- Assessment is good: students are well informed of their progress
- ICT is well used to enrich the curriculum
- Students have positive attitudes; their behaviour is good because of consistent application of college policy
- The curriculum is well planned to suit the needs of all students

### Commentary

#### Examination results

83. The results of teachers' assessments of students in Year 9 in 2003 were above the average reported nationally for both boys and girls. A number of students successfully sat the GCSE examination in French at the end of Year 9. The picture in 2004 was similar. GCSE French results were well above the national average, with boys doing particularly well. All students achieved grades A\* - G. German results were above the national average, and girls did significantly better than boys. In 2004, GCSE French results were close to the national average, but many students in Year 11 had already successfully taken the examination. The German results were outstanding.

#### Standards and achievement

84. Standards in the current Year 9 are above average, Students speak and write well, using a range of tenses. A lower-ability group began Spanish in Year 9: students' motivation has improved and they are making good progress. In Year 11, standards in French are above

average: good results are expected. Students use their skills well in combination – listening, speaking and reading on family relationships, for example. Standards in German are currently average: students produce good coursework, but their speaking is not yet reaching higher levels.

85. Students achieve well and make good progress. In Year 7, their enthusiasm and enjoyment show that they have made a very good start in French. Students in Year 8 use language well in personal dialogue. Year 10 French students consolidate their earlier learning well. Year 10 German students have made a good start on their second language. Students with special educational needs make good progress at all levels.

### Teaching and learning

86. Teachers adopt a lively, engaging approach with good modelling of the various languages. There is a focus on using language for personal communication. ICT is well used in presentation and enriches the curriculum. Teachers plan work carefully and this supports the learning of all students well, especially those with special educational needs. Because of the good teaching, students learn well. They develop their knowledge and understanding through practice and reinforcement and apply it in meaningful contexts. There is a good focus on examination requirements and techniques in Years 10 and 11. Good, regular assessment keeps students informed of their progress and how to improve. Routine marking of work is good: students receive support and encouragement. Students' attitudes are positive. Their behaviour is good and they apply themselves to their work, because college policy is consistently and diligently applied.

### Leadership and management

87. Very good leadership has clear vision for the department and provides a very good role model. Management is good: the department has been restructured and organised effectively. Monitoring is in place and a cohesive team has been built. Policies and practice are shared. The department has emerged well from a period of staffing instability.
88. Good schemes of work cater for students of all levels of attainment. The initiative with Spanish in Year 9 has begun well and German is well established. The programme of visits to France and Germany contributes to the good curriculum. There is a small but well-stocked library collection. Accommodation is currently unsatisfactory, though the department has made the best use of it. The new building and improved ICT resources are essential to further development.
89. Since the last inspection, German has improved significantly, teaching is consistently good and students' progress in languages is better. The department has the capacity to maintain its good pace of improvement.

### MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is satisfactory.

	Years 7, 8 and 9	Years 10 and 11
Standards	Average	Average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Good
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Good

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since the last inspection	Satisfactory

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students of all abilities achieve well by the age of 16 because of effective teaching
- The subject benefits from some highly skilled teaching
- Weaknesses in planning and the use of assessment limit the quality of provision
- The keen mathematics team provide a variety of extra classes and activities

## **Commentary**

### **Examination results**

90. When compared with all schools, results in 2003 were average. Compared with similar schools, GCSE mathematics results were above average and the Year 9 results were average. The GCSE results in 2004 were slightly higher with all students gaining a grade. The achievement of boys and girls is similar. The highest-attaining students have had the opportunity to take examinations early and extend their studies.

### **Standards and achievement**

91. When they start in Year 7, students' overall standards are average. Analysis of results and evidence from work show that, by Year 11, the students have made good progress in mathematics. Standards are at expected levels in all the areas of number, algebra, geometry and statistics. The written work of students is neat and carefully completed. At their various levels of ability the students manipulate algebra competently and apply routine written methods to answer questions. Coursework from Year 11 shows sound standards in carrying out and recording investigations. Students are less strong at talking about methods and devising their own ways of solving problems. Whilst behaviour and attitudes overall are satisfactory, in too many lessons the students' achievement is restricted by chatter and bad behaviour.

### **Teaching and learning**

92. In the best lessons, the students discuss mathematical ideas sensibly in pairs or groups to improve their understanding. There is some excellent use of interactive whiteboards and practical resources. In one very good lesson, students learnt about fractions by discussing proportions of food. They used individual whiteboards to jot down answers which were all valued by the teacher, thus promoting positive attitudes. Overall in mathematics, there are appropriate expectations of what the students can do, especially in lower-attaining sets, and this contributes to success at GCSE. In general, teachers have the specialist knowledge of the subject, so they teach the necessary facts and skills accurately. Lessons are organised well to include an activity at the start to engage students and a clear objective against which progress is reviewed at the end. Regular use of homework contributes to learning and feedback comments on work are helpful. Sound use is made of ICT in mathematics, both by teachers in their teaching and by students in their work.
93. Schemes of work are not well enough planned and this affects the consistency in teaching. Literacy in mathematics is also weak, with insufficient mathematical talk by students or attention to key words. Practical resources such as mini-whiteboards are in short supply, and so are too little used to enhance learning. Students are not effectively involved in their own assessment so that they know how to improve. The tracking of individual students' progress has yet to be established effectively across all years.

### **Leadership and management**

94. The subject is purposefully led and staff are suitably encouraged. A keen and effective team of teachers support each other well. College systems for the evaluation of standards and teaching are helping to focus on improvements needed, such as in planning and assessment. However, the leadership of mathematics is not ensuring consistency by establishing policies or detailed schemes of work that could guide all those involved in



teaching the subject. The overall curriculum is satisfactory, being based on textbooks and examination syllabuses, but enrichment is a particular strength. For example, individual staff contribute successfully to working with primary schools, providing extra classes and involving students in national competitions. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory as provision has been enhanced and standards maintained.

### Mathematics across the curriculum

95. Students make sound use of mathematical skills in other subjects, although the success of this is mainly reliant on the initiative of the teachers involved. This is strongest in design and technology for example where the scheme of work identifies key opportunities, such as using symmetry ideas in design or numerical skills when measuring. In other subjects, especially science and geography, little is planned specifically that uses or extends students' mathematical skills. However, in these subjects, and also ICT and physical education, the students have sufficient skills, for example when interpreting graphs and data or when using measurement.

## SCIENCE

Provision in science is good.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Average	Above average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good
Leadership	Very good	
Management	Very good	
Progress since the last inspection	Good	

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching in Years 10 and 11 has resulted in above average results in science and environmental studies
- The management and organisation of the department supports the work of all staff and impacts positively on students' learning and progress
- The widespread use of computers and other ICT by staff and students has increased understanding in all areas of the science curriculum
- In a few lessons, the disruptive behaviour of some students adversely affects not only their concentration and learning, but also that of others in the group

### Commentary

#### Examination Results

96. Results in 2003 for national tests at the end of Year 9 were average when compared to all schools nationally, and well above average when compared to students' previous results in national tests. Students' performance was better in science than in English or mathematics.
97. In 2003 results for GCSE were well above average both for science and environmental studies. The performance of boys and girls was similar. Students achieved similar results in

English but performed better than in mathematics. The most recent results for science were similar to those of 2003 but the environmental studies results were lower.

### **Standards and Achievements**

98. Students' attainment on entry to the college is broadly average. By the end of Year 9 students achieve well compared to previous performance. In lessons they respond positively, using their oral skills to express their opinions clearly and logically to staff and each other. They have confidence in working independently on written exercises and also constructively with others in practical groups. Students are encouraged to increase their learning by using computers, data loggers and interactive white boards and this they do to good effect.
99. In Years 7 and 8 they develop and use their own personal study skills which increases their learning and progress. In a few lessons, a minority of students behave unsatisfactorily. This behaviour adversely affects the progress made by themselves and other members of the class.
100. The majority of students in Years 10 and 11 work constructively, developing their writing, oral, listening and practical skills. They have confidence in using computers, both as an aid to learning and also as a tool to record and analyse their results. This informs their future learning and helps to raise standards.

### **Teaching and learning**

101. Students' progress is supported by the knowledge, enthusiasm and skills of helpful and friendly staff, keen for them to succeed. Staff give freely of their time, both within and outside the normal college day, with catch-up and revision sessions.
102. Teaching is most effective where teachers have good knowledge of the subject, imparted to students in a well-structured and enthusiastic manner. In these circumstances students have confidence in the teaching, concentrate and hence progress with their studies. A Year 9 lesson, concerned with the transfer of heat, used a wide variety of teaching methods, including data logging to maintain students' interest and concentration. In a Year 10 class, computers were used to simulate an experiment, which together with more traditional methods stimulated students' imaginations and understanding of relevant factors affecting frictional forces. In another Year 10 lesson expectations for behaviour were too low, behaviour was poor and students did not make progress.

### **Leadership and management**

103. Since the last inspection, leadership and management has focused on improving the provision for science in order to increase the achievement of all students. The overall links between the college improvement plan, the departmental plans, schemes of work and lesson plans are clear. At the regular departmental meetings, students' achievement and progress are discussed and steps taken to rectify any under performance. Teachers' knowledge and skills are enhanced by further training, organised within the department and at whole-college sessions. All teaching and non-teaching staff, are enthusiastic about the success of the department and are working together to develop it further. An in-depth analysis of all student results has been carried out and is leading to the introduction of more appropriate courses for some targeted groups of students.
104. The department is well resourced and supported by dedicated technicians who are also very effective teaching assistants, helping those who need additional support.

### **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)**

Provision for ICT is satisfactory.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Average	Below average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Leadership	Satisfactory	
Management	Unsatisfactory	
Progress since the last inspection	Satisfactory	

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teachers have good subject knowledge and resources have been developed to support teaching and learning
- Higher-attaining students are not always challenged sufficiently
- Insufficient curriculum time is available to deliver ICT in Years 10 and 11 and as a result GCSE results are very poor

### **Commentary**

#### **Examination results**

105. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2003 showed attainment to be above average. More rigid assessment recently suggested that earlier results were over-generous and attainment was below average. The results of girls were better than those of boys. Girls' results were better than those of boys in GCSE, but results in 2003 were well below average and the most recent results are very low. This is due to insufficient curriculum time being available to deliver the double award course in Years 10 and 11.

#### **Standards and achievement**

106. Standards seen in Years 7 to 9 are average, but in Years 10 and 11 standards are below expectations. Students make satisfactory progress in Years 7 to 9. Students are able to identify with reasons, suitable logos to incorporate into a presentation and test predictions using a spreadsheet, discovering patterns and relationships. In a lively discussion Year 9 students identified the use of ICT in a drama production with some students understanding the significance of Gantt charts in planning. Year 10 students were able to identify drawbacks and advantages of marketing strategies and Year 11 students showed a superficial understanding of social implications of ICT as well as methods of input and output.

#### **Teaching and learning**

107. Teachers have good subject knowledge and in the best lessons teachers use a variety of teaching strategies to stimulate student interest and have high expectations for behaviour. Students know what they need to achieve and this keeps them focused and making good progress. Resources are used imaginatively to stimulate interest and students are well supported. The use of question and answer sessions, encouraged by praise, enables teachers to establish what students have learnt. In other, less successful lessons planning is less thorough, with missed opportunities to use resources, and the pace of lessons is too slow. Students are not always clear what they are supposed to be doing and are less involved. In all lessons lower-attaining students are well supported and make good progress, but higher-attaining students are not always challenged sufficiently and this limits their progress. Work in Years 10 and 11 is marked well with guidelines on how it can be improved. In Years 7 to 9, marking is satisfactory. Students are given guidance on how

they can improve their work, but they are not given National Curriculum levels and there is no evidence of moderation of assessment across the department.

### **Leadership and management**

108. Departmental leadership is satisfactory, but with the sharing of good practice within the department an area for development. The co-ordination of the roles of those responsible for ICT throughout the college require clarification. The unsatisfactory management of the curriculum in Years 10 and 11 is a result of a whole-college decision taken over three years ago. At the time of the inspection plans were still being developed to introduce a more suitable course. Since the last inspection there has been considerable investment in ICT resources and overall improvement has been satisfactory.

### **Cross-curricular use of ICT**

109. Cross-curricular use of ICT is satisfactory. Good use is made of ICT in science, modern foreign languages, history, music and design technology. In science students use lap top computers for logging and handling data. ICT opportunities are identified in schemes of work in modern foreign languages and history and there is a good programme of ICT activities including the use of web sites and word processing. Students use ICT in music for composition. This is particularly well developed in Years 10 and 11. They use keyboards and do their own recording. In design technology computers support students' learning well. There is good use of CAD/CAM (computer aided design/ computer aided manufacture) and students have access to a milling machine. The use of ICT in mathematics, English and physical education is satisfactory. Interactive whiteboards are used skilfully to support teaching and learning in mathematics and physical education. In English some use of word-processing was seen in the work sampled. Use of ICT remains unsatisfactory in art and geography. In art at the time of the inspection the computer was broken and there was no scanner. This was an issue from the last inspection and remains so. In geography problems with wireless connections limit the use of ICT by students in lessons, although there is good use of the interactive whiteboard to support teaching and learning. Little data handling was seen in the work sample and the use of ICT in geography remains unsatisfactory.
110. The library is equipped with 30 modern computers. These can be booked for class use of by groups of students to develop their work. These are well used at the end of the college day to support students' homework.

## **HUMANITIES**

### **Geography**

Provision in geography is unsatisfactory.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Average	Below average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Teaching and Learning	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory

Leadership	Unsatisfactory
Management	Unsatisfactory
Progress since last inspection	Unsatisfactory

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Students' achievement is satisfactory in Years 7, 8 and 9, but unsatisfactory in Years 10 and 11
- Students' attitudes and behaviour are unsatisfactory in some lessons and have a negative effect on their achievement
- Although the curriculum is generally broad, varied and interesting, students have too few opportunities to use ICT to help them learn

### **Commentary**

#### **Examination results**

111. Results from teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were average. The college results at GCSE in 2003 were below average and in 2004 they declined further.

#### **Standards and achievement**

112. Students' work at the end of Year 9 and Year 11 reflects these results. The achievement of students in Years 10 and 11 has particularly suffered because there have been staff absences and subsequent arrangements have not sufficiently ensured a sustained and continuous approach to their lessons. In some classes throughout the college, students' attitudes and behaviour in lessons sometimes result in them achieving less than they should.

#### **Teaching and learning**

113. Students' work shows that teaching and learning are inconsistent between classes although the new schemes of work are providing more consistent planning, which was apparent in lessons seen during the inspection. Teaching is better in Years 7, 8 and 9, although there are still inconsistencies. While in some lessons teaching is good and some teachers who know the subject well provide clear explanations and demonstrations, students' work shows that in other lessons, teaching is weaker. These classes are sometimes taught by non-specialists who are less well placed to help the students in Years 10 and 11 to achieve. While every effort was made during the inspection to provide better teaching, there was insufficient assessment information about students' levels of knowledge and understanding so that at times, the work set was either too difficult or too easy. For example, in a Year 7 lesson about four figure references, a high proportion of students had learned how to use these in their primary schools. As a result, some of these students became bored by the activity, which also did not relate to a real map and location, so they felt they were learning very little. The class became very noisy, and although the teacher skilfully used class management strategies to improve the situation, overall the learning of many was adversely affected. Where teaching was good, as in a Year 10 lesson, the teacher made the purpose of the lesson clear and used video material well to help students understand and maintain their interest. However, even in this better lesson, students were too dependent on the teacher and not learning to think for themselves sufficiently.
114. The marking of students' work is variable. Some is detailed and informative so that students are clear about areas they need to improve, but generally, marking is cursory and the quality of work has declined.

#### **Leadership and management**

115. Although the new scheme of work has recently improved planning, other developments have been slow. Visual material makes a good contribution to some lessons, but there is too little fieldwork, particularly in Years 8 and 9, and this combined with the use of non-specialist teachers means that the subject at times lacks stimulating material and some lessons fail to capture students' interest sufficiently. The access to ICT is very restricted, so students have too few opportunities to develop its use with the result that this aspect of students' achievement is limited. Since the last inspection, results have declined and there has been insufficient progress with the key issues raised.

### History

Provision in history is good.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Average	Above average
Achievements	Good	Good
Teaching and Learning	Good	Good

  

Leadership	Very good
Management	Good
Progress since last inspection	Good

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE results are above average and the most recent results show further improvement
- Teachers' planning builds successfully on the students' previous knowledge, skills and understanding, enabling them to achieve well
- The department has developed a strong team approach in which very imaginative teaching flourishes
- The practical tasks and very active lessons have very skilfully raised the interest of students, particularly the boys, in the subject
- Although students' response is generally good, a small but significant number of students arrives late and lacks commitment, and so do not make the most of opportunities in lessons

### Commentary

#### Examination results

116. In 2003 teacher assessments show students' standards are average at the end of Year 9. GCSE results in 2003 were above national average and have improved further in 2004.

#### Standards and achievement

117. Students enter the college with average knowledge and understanding of history, but their skills are often below average. Present standards in Years 7, 8 and 9 are average. Most students are achieving well, because they have significantly improved their skills in the subject. In Years 10 and 11, standards of the option groups are above average and students are achieving well.

#### Teaching and learning

118. When students enter history lessons, they are immediately involved a variety of very skilfully planned activities designed to make them think, discuss ideas and make decisions. This was particularly apparent in very well planned work based on role playing a recruitment tribunal and when Year 9 students debated who should be blamed for the failures of the Battle of the Somme. The boxing match approach, in the latter, was particularly successful in extending the knowledge and understanding of the gifted students. Teachers encourage students to question and to be active learners and

independent researchers. In GCSE work on medicine through time, they were encouraged to develop hypotheses about the contribution of key individuals and what the results of their work had been. This, together with the good marking and assessment, is an important contributor to the continuing rise in GCSE results. The energetic and collaborative work seen in GCSE lessons ensures a good understanding of the industrial and agricultural revolutions. The coursework component is also well taught and students have a clear understanding of how the suffragette movement affected women's rights to vote. Unfortunately in a significant number of the lessons seen, a number of students arrived late, without any excuse. There were several times when individuals did not attempt to take an active part in the very well prepared tasks and clearly avoided work. As a result, they lost out on a very good learning opportunity. Their lack of enthusiasm in response to the energetic teaching was not sufficiently addressed.

### Leadership and management

119. A very clear determination to maintain high standards is evident. The development of a strong team approach ensures that very good ideas are put into practice well. A skilfully planned programme is well supported by the assessment for learning that gives students good guidance on how to develop and improve their work. Novel teaching methods are used very well in many sessions. Appropriate homework is regularly set. Display of students' work is very good, particularly that celebrating Black history week. The well-planned trips, such as those to the Imperial War museum and to the Flanders' Great War sites, enhance the course considerably. Very good use is made of external speakers and role play activities. Students were particularly keen to talk about the medieval armour demonstration.

### Religious education

Provision in religious education is unsatisfactory.

	Years 7-9	Years 10 and 11
Standards	Below average	No evidence
Achievement	Unsatisfactory	No evidence
Teaching and learning	Unsatisfactory	No evidence

  

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Unsatisfactory
Progress since last inspection	Unsatisfactory

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- In Years 8 and 9 students are encouraged to reflect on their own and other students' views on current moral and spiritual issues
- Low expectations result in limited progress being made by students in Year 7
- Religious education is not taught in Years 10 and 11
- The use of assessment to help students learn effectively is underdeveloped

### Commentary

#### Standards and achievement

120. The subject is not taught in Years 10 and 11 and the college therefore fails to comply with the statutory requirement to teach religious education across Years 7 to 11.
121. Although students in Year 7 arrive with a varied experience of the subject, the overall standard on entry is average. The department makes appropriate efforts to assess students' learning in Year 7. However, limited use is made of this information to plan work

which is matched to students' varying needs and abilities. This results in students making unsatisfactory progress in Year 7. Standards of the written work seen in Years 8 and 9 are better with higher ability students writing reflective pieces on moral and spiritual themes such as the meaning and purpose of life. However, the work of lower-attaining students and those with special educational needs is often meagre and poorly presented. Achievement is better in Years 8 and 9. By the end of Year 9 students have a satisfactory insight into the main religions taught and are able to discuss a range of moral issues, for example, their own and others explanations for "suffering".



## Teaching and learning

122. Teaching and learning are unsatisfactory. Planning is variable and in some lessons observed activities are poorly sequenced; teachers do not always ensure that there is a range of activities to keep students fully engaged although in the good lesson observed, the teacher had planned a range of activities to match the varying learning styles of students; good behaviour management enabled most students to stay on task throughout the lesson and the work set was challenging for all levels of attainment. The scheme of work for Years 7 to 9 is not followed consistently in Year 7 to allow students to progress in learning about the main religions in a coherent way. The marking of students' work is inconsistent and not always helpful in telling students how to improve. In some lessons observed, students were not fully on task and there is limited provision of separate work to meet the needs of individual students especially lower-attainers. Limited use is made of local faith communities.

## Leadership and management

123. Leadership is now satisfactory as action has been taken to develop the programmes of study to meet the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus. The department is in the process of developing good schemes of work linked to a secure system for developing assessment for learning. The use of ICT is insufficiently developed in Year 7. Management of the department is unsatisfactory as poor progress has been made on some of the issues raised in the last inspection. Whilst there is now a secure scheme of work in place for Years 7 to 9, there is no religious education taught in Years 10 and 11. Although some progress has been made in terms of monitoring and evaluating the work of the department progress there has been a limited impact on teaching and standards in Years 7 to 9 with limited commitment to developing provision for the subject in Years 10 and 11.

## TECHNOLOGY

Provision in design and technology is good.

The college offers GCSE courses in product design using resistant materials, electronic systems, graphics and food technology. In addition a food technology entry-level qualification is available to selected students. Vocational courses are being piloted with further education colleges to enable some students to follow NVQ, and Btech qualifications.

	Years 7, 8 and 9	Years 10 and 11
Standards	Average	Above Average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Progress since last inspection	Very good

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results are above average, and girls consistently do better than boys
- Students achieve well because the learning programmes are well planned and taught
- Students are sometimes less focused on their learning in Years 7 to 9, due to distractions in lessons
- Some GCSE design folder-work is becoming excessive and not focused tightly on the requirements
- The old fittings in food technology rooms are unsatisfactory

## Commentary

### **Examination results**

124. Teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 show that attainment is slightly above average. The very good department assessment procedures ensure that these are accurate. GCSE results were above average in 2003 and the most recent results are very similar. The gap between the boys' and girls' results in 2003 was closer than that found nationally. Girls have consistently done better than boys over the last five years. The most popular subject is food technology where the results have shown an improving trend. Electronic systems results have declined by a third over the last five years and few students took the subject in 2004. Product design results have also declined slightly.

### **Standards and achievement**

125. Students in Year 9 are currently working in line with average standards and the very good planning ensures most students achieve well. Achievement is very good in food technology lessons because of the students' planning and preparation for the following practical lessons. Students' literacy development is supported well in these lessons by the use of writing frames to help structure work. Many younger students have weaknesses in illustrating and design drawing. Some boys in particular are not producing as much as girls in their notebooks and have weaker presentation and drawing skills.
126. The current Year 10 and 11 students are making good progress overall. The standards of current GCSE design folders are above average. Students engage and participate well in lessons because the teachers plan and set effective tasks. Students with special educational needs do particularly well because of the good additional support by technicians and learning assistants.

### **Teaching and learning**

127. There is excellent planning of the overall learning programme in Years 7 to 9, and this enables teachers to have well structured lessons. The technology special status of the college has enabled the department to establish good use of ICT and use CAD in Year 8 lessons.
128. There are good displays in the teaching rooms that help to promote the requirements of the subject. Although there are course work guidance booklets, many students are producing excessive folder work with too much time being spent on decoration rather than a sharp focus on meeting the requirements for high grades. Learning becomes more difficult when three examination courses are timetabled together in the same room. Students have good opportunities to enhance their interests in the subject through: course work clubs; summer schools; and, taking part in a national environmental vehicle design competition.

### **Leadership and management**

129. The department benefits from very good role models, who carry out very thorough analysis to identify how further improvement can be made. The outreach work with local primary schools and further education is very good and is leading to curriculum development. Textiles design is not offered currently. The accommodation for food technology is very dated and does not meet requirements.

### **VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS**

#### **Art and design**

Provision in art and design is very good.

	Years 7, 8 and 9	Years 10 and 11
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Standards	Above expectation	Average
Achievement	Very good	Good
Teaching and Learning	Very good	Very good
Leadership	Very good	
Management	Very good	
Improvement since last inspection	Satisfactory	

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The very good teaching, with innovative approaches to learning, leads to very good achievement overall
- The behaviour and the attitudes of students are very good
- Leadership is reflective, visionary and purposeful and there is excellent teamwork
- Visits to galleries and trips abroad have made a significant contribution to students' spiritual and cultural development
- There are insufficient resources and opportunities to work with computers
- The accommodation is poor and poses risks to the health and wellbeing of staff and students

### **Commentary**

130. Teacher assessments in 2003 show standards at the end of Year 9 to be above expected levels for students' ages. Standards were average in the 2003 GCSE examinations with the performance of boys being significantly better than the national average. The most recent results show some decline. However, analysis of the results show that of the students who under-performed against their predicted results, several had a poor record of attendance.

### **Standards and achievement**

131. The quality of work displayed in classrooms and the high regard students have for the subject and their work all contribute positively to their very good attitudes and achievement. Most students work hard in lessons and in their own time. The quality and presentation of work in their sketchbooks is a major strength and students are rightly proud of these. They speak fluently and with understanding about artists' work and the contextual factors that influence it. Several notable examples were seen, for example in Year 7 where students talked of the energy communicated in Turner's seascapes and in Year 8 where they discussed the way Munch used colour to set the mood and atmosphere for 'The Scream'. Students of all abilities and needs, take a full and active part in a range of tasks. They are engaged and motivated by the projects teachers plan for them. By Year 9 students make informed decisions and work independently on a range of activities – different printmaking techniques, clay work and drawing and painting. They know how they well they are progressing and understand how to improve. Although the quality of teaching in Years 10 and 11 is very good factors such as poor accommodation and limited access to ICT resources have a negative impact on students' achievements.

### **Teaching and Learning**

132. Teachers make excellent preparations that ensure a good balance of firsthand and secondary source materials and videos. Taking students to exhibitions, like the Vivien Westwood retrospective at the Victoria and Albert museum, proved an inspiration for both boys and girls and led to some very imaginative work by Year 11 students. A trip to Barcelona had a similar impact. Students are immersed in multi sensory experiences – visual, oral and aural - that are well matched and tuned to their learning needs. Some highly imaginative and effective strategies for developing students' literacy skills have been devised. As a consequence the annotations, that accompany students' visual research, are often of high quality and students can speak confidently about their own and others' work.

### **Leadership and Management**

133. Leadership is visionary, there is excellent teamwork and staff regularly review and reflect on their teaching and its impact on students' work and achievement. Despite the poor accommodation, that poses risks to the health and wellbeing of staff and students, and has inadequate storage facilities, the subject continues to make a strong contribution to the college ethos through students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The

access to and use of computers remain unsatisfactory, as they were at the time of the last inspection.

## Music

The provision in music is very good.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Above average	Well above average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

  

Leadership	Very good
Management	Good
Progress since last inspection	Good

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE results are well above average
- The good quality teaching and students positive attitude to the subject are contributing positively to learning
- The excellent out-of-college musical activities are well supported by the students and are adding positively to their musical experiences
- The planning of lessons is thorough on the whole, but lacks specific challenges for the higher-attaining and musically talented students

### Commentary

#### Examination results

134. Teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2003 indicated that standards were well above average. Although standards are above average these results are were over generous as they did not include a detailed assessment of the creative element of the National Curriculum. In the 2003 GCSE music examination, results were significantly above the national average. The most recent results show that these high standards have been maintained. Girls' attainment was better than that of boys.

#### Standards and achievement

135. Students join the college in Year 7 with average standards. However, with the benefit of good teaching, the emphasis on performance and students positive attitudes to the subject, standards are above average by the time they reach 14-years-old and so achievement is good. Many students play an instrument and this is contributing positively to their overall good rhythmic skills. These qualities are further developed by the excellent and varied range of out-of-college time musical ensembles. Students have listened to a range of different styles of music and talk with enthusiasm about the varying types they have experienced. They have a competent knowledge of basic composing techniques but these skills are not as well established as their performance. The contributory reason for this is that, in the past, there has been a greater emphasis on performance.
136. In Years 10 and 11 the good achievement continues and standards in the GCSE groups are well above average. Students' good instrumental ability is contributing positively to their composing skills, producing compositions that show an individual style and good structure. Students use ICT music programs effectively to support and enhance their creative skills. Their knowledge of historical developments is well established naming and recognising different periods of music.

#### Teaching and learning

137. Teachers have good specialist skills and use their knowledge effectively to guide and advise students. A particular strength of the teaching is the starter activities at the beginning of

lessons. This approach quickly engages students' interest leading and contributing well to the main focus of a lesson. This was very noticeable in a Year 11 lesson. Here the starter activity, looking at the keywords for Gamelan and Indian music, prepared students well for the listening session contributing positively to their understanding and learning. The planning of lessons is generally thorough with clearly identified learning outcomes. However, these plans do not always include specific strategies for the higher-attaining students who do not always reach their potential in lessons. Learning is slower when too long is spent on one activity leading to students becoming restless and losing interest.

### Leadership and management

138. The leadership shows a clear vision for the future development of the subject. A careful and detailed analysis of examination results has led to action being taken which has helped raised standards, for example the development of strategies to improve boys' achievement. The profile of the subject has been raised considerably in recent years resulting in an increased numbers of students choosing the subject as one of their options. Excellent out-of-college musical activities have been developed which are valued and supported by students.
139. Assessment procedures overall are good. Students know how they are progressing and what they need to do to improve. However, there are not enough opportunities for students to audio record their performances and compositions to support their appraising skills.

### PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is good.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Average	Average
Achievements	Good	Good
Teaching and Learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since last inspection	Very good

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve very well in Junior Sports Leader (JSLA) and dance lessons
- Teachers use their good subject knowledge to plan challenging work that the students enjoy
- A very good extra-curricular programme enables students to develop their skills to a higher level in competitive sports
- A small but significant number of students do not respond positively to the good teaching and miss out on the good learning opportunities
- Facilities are unsatisfactory and limit the development of the subject

### Commentary

#### Examination results

140. Teacher assessment shows that students' standards at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were average. GCSE results in 2003 were above average, the most recent results show some decline.

#### Standards and achievement

141. The majority of students enter the college with average skills in sport, but their knowledge and understanding is clearly below average. Most boys and girls in the present Year 9 are

average, but their skills in gymnastics are below average. As their knowledge and understanding are average, their achievement is good.

142. GCSE standards are above average and students achieve well, particularly in practical skills, with several talented players achieving very well at a high standard. The standards of students in Year 11 core studies are average, but in dance well above average. The achievement overall is good. Students with special educational needs achieve as well as their classmates.

### **Teaching and learning**

143. Teaching is well planned and the teachers use their good subject knowledge to challenge students with appropriate tasks. Year 9 girls learn and achieve well in swimming, because the life saving strokes they are taught build well on their skills in the pool. Boys learning to use the basketball zone defence are able to explain the strengths of this ploy well, because the teacher gives them clear understanding through good demonstrations. Teachers use their demonstration skills well in football, netball and gymnastics. This helps students to better understand what skilled performance is. In GCSE theory lessons, good use is being made of ICT to develop students' knowledge of physiology and performance. In all year groups, when activities are not sufficiently well organised, a small number of students quickly loses interest, and some behave unsatisfactorily. This clearly affects their progress and also, disrupts others' learning.

### **Leadership and management**

144. Areas for improvement are identified accurately and clear plans outline how change will be managed. Good links with other local schools are supporting this work well. Teachers are good role models for students. Students' comments about their courses are very positive, particularly the girls who are involved in yoga. Extra-curricular sports' activities are very good and good external links with local sports' clubs cater for the talented performers well. Strong community links are developing well due to the School Sports Education Officer's (SSEO) very good work with feeder schools. A JSLA course has been developed and this gives Year 10 and 11 students a very good opportunity to work with students from feeder schools. A very successful mini-Olympics event was recently held. The gala, arranged with feeder schools, took place during the inspection and was very well organised by the students under the supervision of skilled guidance of a teacher and the SSEO.
145. Accommodation is unsatisfactory. Indoor sports facilities consist of an old small gym and poor changing rooms. There are no winter all-weather facilities for outdoor sports or floodlighting. The gymnasium has to be used for college examinations. This causes difficulties for the teaching of physical education and restricts community use. The building work also has had a detrimental affect, particularly on the indoor programme and the girls' netball.

### **Dance**

146. Lessons were sampled in dance. In a very good GCSE dance lesson, the teacher used her very good subject knowledge to push the students on and they learned new skills and techniques very well. At the same time this session was used to teach the set dance to a colleague and a PGCE student. This was excellent sharing of good practice. In a Year 11, core physical education, dance lessons students were given the opportunity to plan their own sequences and use their knowledge of choreography to select and plan movements. It was good to see boys performing along side the girls with considerable enthusiasm and skill. Their learning was very good because they responded to the challenge in a very



mature way. The teaching was very well structured and showed the considerable progress that students have made within the subject. The department is very well led and managed.

## **BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES**

### **Business studies**

Provision in business studies is satisfactory.

	Year 11
Standards	Average
Achievement	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory
Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since the last inspection	Good

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teaching displays good knowledge of the subject and the requirements of the examination board
- Students know what they need to do to improve their work
- Unsatisfactory student behaviour affects learning in some lessons

### **Commentary**

#### **Examination results**

147. Results in 2004 were adversely affected by staffing difficulties due to illness. This was the first cohort for students following the applied GCSE in business studies and results were below average with boys achieving less well than girls.

#### **Standards and achievement**

148. Standards seen in lessons were average. Students were able to identify factors influencing the activities of a company and factors influencing location of a business. Higher-attaining students showed an understanding of environmental laws and ways of conforming to them. All students were able to understand the advantages and drawbacks of different methods of payment, relating them to employers and customers. Some students made use of screen dumps to make their word-processed account clearer. In Year 10 students understood how changes in interest rates and exchange rates affect costs of production and sales.

#### **Teaching and learning**

149. Strengths in teaching are good subject knowledge and knowledge of examination board requirements. Lessons are well planned. In the best lessons there was a variety of activities, which kept students engrossed. Students were supported well during these activities and good teacher-led discussions enabled students to develop their ideas. A good use of humour stimulated student interest and a range of teaching styles was used. Some students worked well in groups and group activities were managed well. In some cases teacher delivery was didactic, but fuelled with enthusiasm and the pace was fast, ensuring students progressed well. In other, less successful lessons, students were given less challenge and a significant number of students became more involved with using the Internet inappropriately and made limited progress. Work is well marked. Clear guidelines are included in Year 10 and Year 11 folders on how to improve and there are target grades for each homework activity. Performance data is used to monitor students' progress and support those students who are underachieving. Year 11 students know their target grade.

## Leadership and management

150. Good links have been established with the education business partnership to enable speakers to come and support learning. Business studies has become a popular course. Fifty students are currently following the course and in 2004 the course was considerably over-subscribed. Coursework and development of the subject are well managed and supported by good teaching resources. There has been considerable improvement in the ICT resources available to deliver this subject since the last inspection. Business studies is now available as a separate option. At the time of the last inspection business studies was delivered in combination with either design and technology or ICT.

## PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

### Citizenship

The provision in citizenship is good.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Average	Average
Achievements	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Teaching and Learning	Satisfactory	Satisfactory

  

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since last inspection	n/a

## **Main strengths**

- The vision for the subject is clearly communicated to staff and students by the leadership
- The emphasis on students' involvement in college and community life contributes greatly to their active involvement in citizenship
- A high number of students gained A\* to C grades in citizenship in the 2004 GCSE
- The display relating to citizenship in corridors and in classrooms gives a high profile to the subject

## **Commentary**

### **Examination results**

151. In 2004 students were entered for GCSE in citizenship for the first time. About half of the Year 11 cohort gained A\* to C grades. Most students achieved or exceeded their personal targets, although some higher-attaining boys underachieved. Some students with special educational needs experienced difficulty with the extended writing tasks in the examination.

### **Standards and achievement**

152. In lessons, from a scrutiny of written work and from students' pastoral profiles, standards of attainment throughout the college are in line with national expectations and achievement is satisfactory. Many students discuss and write about environmental, political and moral issues with confidence and commitment. Students also express their personal opinions confidently about current issues. There is some very good quality written work produced when students write about their personal experiences of citizenship. Students with special educational needs produce well-presented written work to consolidate class discussion.

### **Teaching and learning**

153. Teaching and learning are overall satisfactory from Years 7 to 11, but ranges from very good to unsatisfactory. In good and very good lessons teachers use a variety of stimulating approaches. The lessons have pace and students make good progress. Teachers have good subject knowledge and give good support and relationships are very positive. In unsatisfactory lessons students are disaffected and apathetic and most students make little effort to engage in activities. Citizenship is taught discretely in citizenship lessons in Years 9 to 11 and additionally in Years 7 to 11 in year tutor time as part of the PSHE programme. Some other subjects also teach aspects of citizenship as part of their curriculum, but do not always make it explicit to students that they are covering citizenship. The college offers very good opportunities to students to be actively involved in citizenship. There are numerous opportunities for students to assume responsibility both in the college and in the community. Students, who participate in the year or college councils have a very good engagement in citizenship. The college has a prefect system, which provides good opportunities for older students to take responsibility, and a strong commitment to involving students actively in the running of the college through college guides and subject representatives.

### **Leadership and management**

154. The introduction of citizenship as a National Curriculum subject has been well planned and there is a very clear vision for its future development. A detailed audit of the elements of citizenship in the curriculum was carried out, which has enabled the college to identify which subjects can teach specific aspects of citizenship. There is a clearly identified curriculum, good schemes of work and some high quality materials have been developed for teachers to use. The allocation of time for the GCSE course is restricted, but it is

enhanced by the citizenship taught in the year form time. Displays featuring aspects of citizenship are prominent with the college. The provision of books relating to citizenship in the library are good. There is a good system to monitor the delivery of citizenship, which enables the college to assess students' levels of attainment and commitment. Tutors write detailed reports relating to students' involvement in citizenship. Students are encouraged to evaluate their own progress.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

The leadership of the headteacher	4
The leadership of other key staff	4
The effectiveness of management	4

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