

INSPECTION REPORT

SIR HARRY SMITH COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Whittlesey

LEA area: Cambridgeshire

Unique reference number: 110870

Headteacher: Mr Mike Sandeman

Lead inspector: R Peter J McGregor

Dates of inspection: 17th – 21st January 2005

Inspection number: 273102

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive
School category: Community
Age range of pupils: 11-18
Gender of pupils: Mixed
Number on roll: 987

School address: Eastrea Road
Whittlesey
Peterborough
Cambridgeshire
Postcode: PE7 1XB

Telephone number: 01733 703991
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Appropriate authority: The governing Body
Name of chair of governors: Mr John King

Date of previous inspection: 30th November 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Sir Harry Smith is a mixed comprehensive school for pupils aged 11 to 18, with specialist school status for science, gained in September 2003. It has also achieved Investors in People. It is about average in size for secondary schools, with 987 pupils, including 83 students in the sixth form. The sixth form is linked with a local 11-18 comprehensive school, in a different local education authority area. The two schools share the teaching of several subjects. Pupils of a wide range of ability attend the school, including some of the very highest ability and others who find learning difficult. Overall standards are broadly average at the start of Year 7. The school has a very small number of pupils at an early stage of acquiring English. About one in every ten pupils, an average proportion, has special educational needs, mainly moderate learning, but with a few pupils with social, emotional and behavioural, dyslexia, speech or communication, hearing impairment, visual impairment, multi-sensory, physical or autistic disabilities. The school has 21 pupils with formal Statements of need, an average number for this size of school. About one in every twelve pupils is entitled to a free school meal, broadly in line with the national proportion. Pupils come from the area immediately surrounding the school, which is socially mixed, but with relatively low aspirations for higher education. Almost all of the pupils are white British, with only a few who are of other ethnic backgrounds. The community is making increased use of school facilities, with night school classes taking place each weekday evening.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
3525	Peter McGregor	Lead inspector	Science; physics in the sixth form
19693	Sally Hall	Lay inspector	
23307	Neil McDonough	Team inspector	
22423	Jon Lovgreen	Team inspector	English; English in the sixth form
18178	Ian Matthews	Team inspector	Mathematics; mathematics in the sixth form
32231	Adrian Lyons	Team inspector	ICT
32329	Andrew Stafford	Team inspector	Art
32861	Gaynor Hartle	Team inspector	Design and technology
33018	Angela Read	Team inspector	Geography; religious education
18663	Phillip Burchell	Team inspector	History; history in the sixth form
33242	Stephen Wall	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages; citizenship
31503	Kevin Sadler	Team inspector	Music; drama
3726	Maureen Bean	Team inspector	Physical education; health and social care
32331	Peter Barnes	Team inspector	Special educational needs; English as an additional language

The inspection contractor was:

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Sir Harry Smith is a good and improving school with several very good features. The headteacher's very effective leadership, fully supported by his senior staff, has set firm foundations for continued development. The vision is clear, of a specialist science college for pupils aged 11 to 18. Governors are very effective. As a result of strengths in teaching, pupils who come into the college with average attainment, and lower than average aspirations, become very committed learners and achieve well, reaching above average standards by the age of 16. Pupils of all abilities and backgrounds are fully involved in college life. They feel valued, work hard, behave well and enjoy taking part in the good range of extra-curricular activities. The sixth form is a strength of the college; students in the sixth form achieve very well as a result of very good teaching. The college provides good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are

- The very good trend in improvement of GCSE results reflects strong senior leadership and determined management, which have resulted in better teaching and learning
- Very good relationships between pupils and staff are a strong feature of the college and contribute to pupils' very positive attitudes
- Very good achievement in English stems from very good teaching and inspirational leadership; the provision for art is unsatisfactory
- A small proportion of weaker teaching leads to unsatisfactory learning
- Very good care and welfare, and good support and guidance, help each pupils' needs to be met
- Inconsistencies in the implementation of policies for assessment, marking, and whole-school literacy restrict the progress being made by some pupils

Pupils' standards have risen considerably since five years ago; their attendance is similar but unauthorised absence has improved and behaviour is just as good. Teaching is far more effective and better use is made of assessment data to give teachers the information they need. The curriculum is broader and the quality of care remains very good. Improved partnerships with parents and the community are now good. **Strong leadership has brought about very good improvement overall.**

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Performance compared with:		all schools			similar schools
		2002	2003	2004	2004
Year 11	GCSE/GNVQ exams (average points scores)	E	D	B	B
Year 13	A/AS level and VCE exams	C	C	n/a	

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

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

Pupils' achievements are good overall, and very good in the sixth form. In the end of Year 9 national tests in 2004, pupils attained average standards in the core subjects of science and maths. The outcome for English is still awaiting ratification. In 2004, results at GCSE improved and 55 per cent gained five or more A*-C passes. This represents good achievement. Boys' and girls' results are similar overall, though girls attain more of the highest grades. Current standards in Years 7 to 9 are average overall with above average standards in English and history and below average in art. Pupils' achievement in most subjects is good, though unsatisfactory in art. Overall standards in Years 10 and 11 are above average. Achievement in all years is very good in English and good in maths; it is satisfactory in science in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. Very good achievement was seen in history and health and social care in Years 10 and 11. Pupils of all abilities, background and gender do well in main school classes, including those with

special educational needs. Pupils' skills in language and literacy, maths and ICT across the curriculum are average. National comparative figures are not available for sixth form examinations for 2004. In 2003, results were broadly average. A higher proportion gained A or B grades in 2004, though overall point scores fell.

Pupils' personal qualities, including their personal development, are good. Their attitudes to learning are very good; they value their education. Behaviour and punctuality are good and attendance satisfactory. A small minority misbehave at times in lessons. The promotion of pupils' social and moral development is very good and satisfactory for their spiritual and cultural development.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The college provides a good quality of education.

Teaching is good in the main school. Teachers have good subject knowledge, set challenging learning activities and use technology to good effect. Most pupils are very well motivated and keen to learn, which they do successfully. Some teaching is excellent or very good. Weaknesses in a small proportion of teaching result from planning which does not meet all pupils' needs and ineffective behaviour management. Teaching is very good in the sixth form. Very good relationships lead to high motivation for most students. Very good systems have been developed to collate and monitor information about pupils' achievements. Across the college, however, use of this data is inconsistent. Curriculum opportunities are good, with a good range of extra-curricular activities. Accommodation is good overall and satisfactory in the sixth form. Resources are good. Interactive whiteboards are being used to good effect to improve teaching and learning. Arrangements for the care of pupils are very good. Good links with parents, other schools and the community help pupils' achievements, though reports for parents do not give sufficient information on what their children need to do to improve. Links with the partner school for sixth form provision are very good.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are very good overall. The headteacher's understanding of the college's strengths and weaknesses and vision for future development are exceptionally clear and appropriate. The leadership by senior managers is very effective and management is good. Procedures for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of teaching and learning are very good but some inconsistencies persist in the application of marking, assessment and literacy policies. Financial management is very effective. Governance is very good overall because of its influence in helping to raise standards at the college. Governors are very supportive, knowledgeable, ask challenging questions and have ensured compliance with almost all statutory requirements. A daily act of collective worship is not provided and assessments of progress in citizenship are not reported to parents.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are pleased with the college, which they consider provides a good education. They remarked that many more local families are now choosing to send their children to the college. Pupils are very positive about the college and are confident that their views are taken seriously.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

The most important things the college should do to improve are

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning in art and in the small proportion of teaching where weaknesses are apparent
- Ensure that reports to parents have sufficient information about what students need to do to improve

- Achieve consistent implementation of policies for marking, assessment and literacy and in the sixth form
- Continue to work to resolve issues concerning the designation of the sixth form, so that the college becomes formally recognised as providing education for students aged seventeen and eighteen

and to meet statutory requirements

- Fulfil assessment and reporting procedures for citizenship
- Provide a daily act of collective worship for all

THE SIXTH FORM

OVERALL EVALUATION

The sixth form is very successful and very cost effective. Students make very good progress. Current sharing arrangements with the partner sixth form are very effective and helpful to the students. The college has worked hard to build a successful sixth form over the past ten years. Nevertheless, it has proved difficult to argue for facilities to satisfy the needs of the growing number of students, when it is unclear which of the two schools sharing the sixth form has final responsibility for the students.

The sixth forms main strengths and weaknesses are

- Leadership is very strong
- Very good teaching is a major factor in the very good achievement of students
- Students' own very positive attitudes and high motivation also increase their achievements
- The provision of courses and guidance systems is very well managed
- The fact that the college is not formally recognised as having students aged seventeen and eighteen causes unhelpful administrative, legal, financial and resource difficulties

QUALITY AND STANDARDS IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES OF THE CURRICULUM

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

Curriculum area	Evaluation
English, languages and communication	Very good in English. Teaching is well informed and stimulating. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and teach large groups very effectively. Students write accurately and at length.
Mathematics	Good in mathematics. Teachers are knowledgeable about the subject and plan effectively to meet individual needs. Some students' knowledge of algebra is weak.
Science	Good in physics. Good teaching from knowledgeable physicists results in good achievement. The strong focus on examination requirements is helpful. Explanations are not always as clear as they could be.
Information and communication technology	Not a focus for inspection
Humanities	Very good in history, because of the quality of teaching, an imaginative curriculum and positive relationships. Students' achievements are very good.
Visual and performing arts and media	Not a focus for inspection
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	Not a focus for inspection

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

The nine other courses taught in the sixth form were sampled. The quality of teaching seen overall was very good and students achieved very well.

ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

Students were very positive about the very good level of advice and support they receive from staff. A statement from a student - *'if we have a problem, staff are there for us'* - represents these views very well. Students benefit from close monitoring and constructive advice from both form tutors and subject teachers. Good guidance on which advanced level courses to take is appreciated by students and they are well supported in the transition from GCSE to sixth form work. In a sixth form where a relatively low, but increasing, proportion of students go on to higher education, they are well prepared to make university applications. Students are equally well prepared to make the best of opportunities for training and employment that are offered.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

Leadership and management of the sixth form are very good. A clear vision for its future is articulated and promoted. The headteacher and senior managers, supported and held to account by governors, form a very effective team. All see the sixth form as an intrinsic part of the future success of the college as a specialist science college. Procedures for tracking student progress and the use of data to set targets and analyse performance are comprehensive and effective, as are the procedures for care, guidance and support. Monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning in the sixth form are developing under the college's quality monitoring procedures.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Students feel they are treated as adults, that their views matter and staff listen to their opinions. Students feel that they make a valuable contribution to the college in supporting younger pupils. They enjoy this responsibility. Students speak highly of their teachers and feel they have helped them enormously during their time at the college. Students recommend the sixth form to others considering A-level courses.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in subjects and courses

Pupils achieve well in Years 7 to 11. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress. Currently, overall standards are average in Year 9 and above average in Year 11. Results at GCSE have risen faster than the national rate of improvement and reflect pupils' good achievement over time.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils of all abilities do well at GCSE, particularly so in English
- Good achievement results from the quality of teaching and pupils' positive attitudes to work
- Pupils make too little progress in art because of weaknesses in teaching in Years 7 to 9
- Where achievement in some classes is not as good as in others, it is a consequence of variations in the quality of teaching and therefore learning
- Pupils with special educational needs do very well when specialist support is provided

Commentary

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 9 – average point scores in 2003 (2004 not available)

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	34.6 (33.3)	33.4 (33.3)
mathematics	37.2 (35.1)	35.4 (34.7)
science	33.7 (32.9)	33.6 (33.3)

There were 167 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

1. The attainment of pupils on entry to the college, based on their Year 6 results, has been broadly average, but with some areas below average. In the end of Year 9 national tests taken in 2003, attainment was above average overall and pupils' achievements were good. This is the last year with a full set of validated results for schools in England, with which performance can be compared, because 2004 data for English is not yet validated. In 2003, pupils attained above average standards in English and mathematics and average standards in science. Results for science remained the same in 2004. For mathematics, they were slightly lower, though at the upper end of the average band.
2. Differences in boys' and girls' results generally reflected national differences. The trend of improvement in Year 9 results over the five years up to 2003 is below the national trend but, when 2004 is included, it is likely to produce a more positive trend of improvement.
3. Current standards in Years 7 to 9 are average and pupils' achievements are good overall. Very good achievement in English results in above average standards. In mathematics, standards are similar to the 2004 results and this indicates good achievement. Achievement is satisfactory in science and standards are average; a similar picture is seen in religious education, ICT and physical education. Average standards in geography, design and technology, music and French indicate good achievement from pupils' starting points. In art, standards are below average and pupils underachieve. Achievement is good in history, German and citizenship with standards that are above average.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	55 (39)	52 (52)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	96 (94)	89 (88)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	99 (98)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	301.1[37.2](32.7)	282.8[34.9](34.7)

There were 163 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in (brackets) are for the previous year. [= equivalent in old points]

4. The proportion of pupils gaining 5 or more GCSE grades A*-C was just above the national average in 2004 and much higher than in 2003. Almost all pupils attained five or more A*-G grades. Pupils achieved well relative to their standards on entry into Year 7.
5. Girls' results are above those of the boys at the higher grades. Overall, boys' and girls' results are generally similar. The trend in the average total GCSE points achieved by pupils is above the national trend of improvement over the five years up to 2004.
6. At GCSE in 2004, standards were best in English, design and technology and French, and not as good in music, drama and geography. The distribution of higher grades at GCSE A* - C, is similar to the national distribution which reflects the good quality of teaching seen for pupils of all abilities in Years 10 and 11. The highest results for grade A* and A were in English, history and design and technology. Pupils achieve a greater proportion of A* and A grades in English than the national average.
7. In Years 10 and 11, pupils' current standards are above average overall. They are achieving well because teaching is effective and they have very positive attitudes to learning. Pupils achieve very well in English, history and health and social care. Achievement is good in mathematics, science, design and technology, music, French, German and physical education. Achievement is satisfactory in ICT, art, geography, religious education and citizenship.
8. Pupils with special educational needs were seen achieving very well in several subject lessons, particularly in English and science, and in withdrawal groups. They make good progress towards targets set, overall, as partly evidenced by the high proportion of pupils in 2004 who gained at least one grade at A*-G. Pupils with Statements of special educational needs progress very well because of the very good quality of assistance provided for them. This includes in-class support from teaching assistants and specialist teaching. The achievement of some pupils on school action and school-action plus with weak literacy skills is more limited, although satisfactory, where materials are not fully adapted to the range of needs. Very few pupils need support with English as an additional language but they are very well provided for and, as a result, achieve very well.
9. Pupils' competence in using their skills of language, mathematics and ICT in other subjects is average. Their listening skills are above average, and understanding of technical language is good in some areas. However, generally too little emphasis is placed on the development of literacy skills in other subjects for pupils to make the progress they could.
10. Compared with standards at the time of the last inspection in 1998, pupils' attainment has improved in all three core subjects for pupils aged fourteen, with test results indicating better achievement for pupils of all abilities. GCSE results are much higher now, the proportion gaining five A*-C having increased from 38 percent to 55 percent. The overall improvement in standards in the main school is very good.

Sixth form

Students of a full range of ability enter the sixth form, but with a higher proportion of lower attainers than normally enter for AS and A-level courses. Overall, standards are below average on entry but students make rapid progress and achieve very well to reach the level they do, which is broadly average overall.

Main strength

- Students make very good progress because of the quality of teaching and their very positive attitudes to work

Commentary

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of entries gaining A-E grades	94.5 (93.2)	N/a (89.4)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	27.3 (25.7)	N/a (32.6)
Average point score per pupil	254.6 (251.2)	N/a (258.2)

There were 26 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

11. National comparative figures are not available for GCE and other sixth form examinations for 2004. In 2003, the last year for which there is validated data with which to make comparisons, results were broadly average. In 2004, examination outcomes improved for the proportions gaining A-B grades, although the average points total gained by each student was lower. Male and female students achieved similar results.
12. In the four subjects focused on during the inspection, standards currently are above average in English and history, average in mathematics and below average in physics.
13. Given the low starting base for many of the students, they achieve very well in most of their sixth form subjects. Achievement in the focus subjects was very good in English and history and good in mathematics and physics. Students' very positive attitudes and the quality of teaching were the main reasons for this achievement. In lessons sampled in the other nine subjects taught, students were generally achieving very well, for example in biology, music and physical education, where expectations were high and relationships very good.
14. Overall, students' competence is average in using language and literacy, mathematical and ICT skills.
15. Students of a great range of backgrounds are welcomed into the sixth form and are equally successful. There are currently no students with special educational needs.
16. Standards are higher than at the time of the last inspection, with a significant improvement in the overall pass rate. In 1998, there were few high-grade passes at GCE Advanced level. Now over a quarter of the results are A-B grades, over half are A-C and over nine out of ten are pass grades. Very good progress has been made over the past five years.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils have very good attitudes and their behaviour is good. The provision for pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good. Attendance is satisfactory and punctuality is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Relationships are very good because the college successfully promotes a strong community spirit where there are high levels of mutual respect

- Pupils are very positive about college life. They are enthusiastic learners and enjoy taking part in out-of-school activities
- Pupils behave well because the college has a clear and consistent approach to promoting good behaviour
- The college does not do enough to prepare pupils for life in a multi-cultural society

Commentary

17. There is a real sense of belonging amongst the pupils, staff and governors and, as some pupils said, ‘*Everyone looks out for each other*’. Teachers, support staff and tutors create an atmosphere where pupils are secure and able to voice their opinions and have the confidence to ask for help. Pupils are very supportive of each other in lessons, work very well in groups and are particularly helpful to any pupil with a physical disability. Pupils enjoy taking responsibility and are keen to take an active part in year councils, student council and prefect duties, all of which have a positive impact on the day-to-day running of the college. Activities such as college productions and residential visits help to foster a sense of community. The college’s very good provision for social development enables pupils to develop into sensitive, articulate and mature citizens and this has a positive impact on their achievements.
18. Pupils are interested in their work and keen to take part in activities outside lessons. They listen carefully to their teachers, are keen to answer questions and settle to work quickly. They enjoy challenging tasks and work with sustained concentration. For example in a Year 8 science lesson on the reflection of light, pupils were confident to answer questions and give their reasons. They then formed into groups without any fuss, collected and used equipment sensibly and discussed their findings with their group members. These very positive attitudes meant that pupils were absorbed in their learning and achieved well. Pupils value the good range of after-school clubs, activity weeks, visits and productions and take part with enthusiasm.
19. Moral development is very good and staff act as good role models. The college has developed a clear and consistent moral code which underpins the behaviour and anti-bullying policies. Pupils respond well to the praise and rewards given by staff and say that they are treated fairly. They also understand the consequences of their actions if they misbehave. Behaviour in lessons is generally good, although a few instances of disruption were seen and pupils were sometimes a little boisterous in the corridors as they changed lessons. The college works very closely with other agencies to give very good support to pupils who have behaviour difficulties. Pupils say that rare incidents of bullying are dealt with swiftly by senior members of staff. The college does all it can to keep its pupils in school and there have been no permanent exclusions for some years. Fixed term exclusions are used appropriately as a sanction for actions such as violence and verbal abuse.

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	945	69	0
White – Irish	2		
White – any other White background	3		
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	2		
Mixed – White and Asian	1		
Mixed – any other mixed background	3		

Asian or Asian British – Indian	4		
Black or Black British – African	2		
Black or Black British – any other Black background	1		
Any other ethnic group	5		
No ethnic group recorded	19		

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

20. The provision for pupils' cultural and spiritual development is satisfactory. Teachers value pupils' ideas and successfully promote their feelings of self-worth. In assemblies and tutor time, staff develop pupils' moral and social awareness but some opportunities are missed for worship and for pupils to reflect on life and its meaning. Pupils gain a good appreciation of cultural aspects of backgrounds similar to their own through the curriculum, such as in music and drama. They also show valuable knowledge of world faiths, and of ethical problems such as racism, in religious education. However opportunities are too few for them to consider the issues that face young people living in a diverse, multi-cultural society.

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

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	7.0	School data	0.9
National data	6.9	National data	1.1

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

21. Levels of attendance and unauthorised absence are broadly in line with those found in similar schools. The college's procedures to promote good attendance are satisfactory. The college sends letters to parents when they have not given a reason for their child being absent, but does not contact home on the first day of an unexplained absence. The vast majority of pupils arrive promptly for the start of school and for lessons, ensuring that no learning time is lost.
22. The good behaviour found at the time of the last inspection has been maintained. Relationships have improved from good to very good; punctuality has improved from satisfactory to good and attendance remains at a satisfactory level. The college continues to promote pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Sixth form

Students' attitudes and behaviour are very good. Punctuality is good and attendance is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students hold the college in high regard and relationships with staff are very good
- Students work hard in lessons and make significant contributions to the life of the college
- The current manual system for recording attendance makes it difficult for managers to monitor attendance

Commentary

23. Students are very positive about the sixth form and an increasing number are keen to stay on for their post-16 education. The college's high standards for conduct and approach to work are successfully carried through into the sixth form. Relationships are very good and students and staff treat each other with respect. In lessons, students are eager to do their best and tackle work in a confident and mature manner. They are willing to undertake

responsibilities, for example helping in lower school lessons and volunteering to work in the community.

24. Attendance is recorded in classes but the current systems do not enable managers to easily monitor overall attendance rates. Students sign in and out of the college building giving accurate records of students on site at any one time.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education is good in the main school and very good in the sixth form. Teaching and opportunities for learning within the curriculum are also good in the main school and very good in the sixth form. The curriculum is broad and well balanced with a good range of extra-curricular activities. Care systems are very good and the college ensures that pupils are well supported in their learning and development throughout the school and particularly in the sixth form. Partnerships with parents, the community and other schools are good overall.

Teaching and learning

The overall quality of teaching is good in the main school. Teaching and learning are both good as teachers have good subject knowledge and most pupils are well motivated and keen to learn. Assessment systems and practices are satisfactory, with some strengths but also some inconsistencies.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The best teaching results in very effective learning
- Very good relationships have been established between pupils and teachers
- The quality of teaching is very good in English throughout the college but unsatisfactory in art in Years 7 to 9
- In a small proportion of the lessons seen, shortcomings in teaching prevented effective learning
- ICT is used effectively to engage pupils in their learning
- Although some departments and individual teachers are good at marking work to show pupils how to improve, practice is inconsistent

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 142 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
6 (4%)	38 (27%)	51(36%)	41(29%)	6 (4%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

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

25. The quality of teaching and learning in the main school is good overall. In Years 7, 8, 10 and 11, the quality observed was good, with some of the best teaching in Years 8 and 10. Teaching was satisfactory overall in Year 9 because more of the unsatisfactory lessons were for that year group. Individual lessons varied in quality between excellent and unsatisfactory, with two-thirds that were good or better. Very good teaching was seen in English throughout the college and in history and health and social care in Years 10 and 11. Teaching was good in most subjects. It was satisfactory in religious education and citizenship, in science and physical education in Years 7 to 9, and in geography and art in Years 10 and 11. The unsatisfactory art teaching in Years 7 to 9 is characterised by low expectations of what pupils can achieve.
26. Teachers use their good subject knowledge imaginatively to prepare challenging and interesting work. Lessons are planned so that there is a good range of structured learning activities, which are almost always well matched to pupils' individual needs. The very good relationships between pupils and teachers contribute greatly to positive learning in lessons.
27. Effective use is being made of the college's interactive whiteboards, for example in modern languages teaching and in personal, social and health education (PSHE). The use of ICT in subjects is much improved since the last report with good examples seen in several areas. Teachers across the curriculum use data projectors effectively to bring their teaching alive and capture pupils' imagination so that they enjoy learning. Pupils were also using ICT well for research and to develop their independent learning. Generally, however, ICT is used more in lessons by teachers than by pupils.
28. The recommendations of the national strategy for teaching and learning in Years 7 to 9 are being introduced. Most, but not all, lessons start with teachers sharing with pupils what they will be learning in the lesson. This is followed by a good, enjoyable starter activity to motivate and involve them. Teachers refer to the objectives during the lesson so that pupils recognise what they are learning, and plan the lesson to make time to assess individual success. In lessons that had this structure, teaching was invariably good or better and resulted in pupils concentrating hard and making good progress.
29. Homework is set regularly and marked effectively. Pupils see the value in these tasks and many have a positive approach to them, aware that such work increases the likelihood of examination success.

30. An excellent German lesson for Year 9 showed several of the teaching strengths identified. The pupils were very involved in their learning as they used individual whiteboards to identify European popular holiday destinations and communicate their answers in German. A number of carefully prepared activities involved pupils in independent and group-learning exercises where the teacher's subject knowledge, high expectations and challenge resulted in very well motivated pupils. In an excellent history lesson for Year 9, a PowerPoint presentation about life in the trenches in World War 1 captured pupils' interest and imagination and resulted in excellent progress.
31. In some satisfactory lessons, strengths outbalanced weaknesses but weaknesses restricted what could be achieved. In a few lessons, weaknesses were significant. For example, in an unsatisfactory science lesson, explanations were unclear and pupils struggled to understand the work on gravity. Behaviour deteriorated and achievement was unsatisfactory. Occasionally teachers' expectations of the pupils were too low and this limited the amount of work completed in the lesson. In Year 9, where teaching and learning were weakest, a small minority of pupils who were not well motivated or interested in learning disrupted the work of others in their classes. In these few lessons, teachers did not have the behaviour management skills needed to resolve the problems.
32. Teaching and learning of pupils with special educational needs are good. Teaching assistants are knowledgeable, enthusiastic and dedicated. They work closely with teachers and know how to assist in lessons. Individual education plans inform teachers of pupils' needs but targets and success criteria are not sharp enough and they are not rigorously monitored across subject areas.
33. Marking of students' work is satisfactory overall but inconsistent. Work is marked regularly and in some subjects, such as English and ICT, this process is thorough, positive and detailed, with clear targets for improvement. In some other subjects, pupils do not know the level at which they are working and marking lacks the detail needed to give pupils guidance for improvement.
34. Since the time of the last inspection, the proportion of good and better teaching has greatly increased. As a result, pupils now make good progress over their time at the college. Overall, very good improvement has been made in the quality of teaching and learning.

Sixth form

The quality of teaching in the sixth form is very good. Teachers have good subject knowledge, understand the needs of the students and generate a very good working atmosphere in classrooms. Students' learning progresses very well. Assessment systems are good and used effectively.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 19 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1	9	9	0	0	0	0

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- All lessons observed were judged to be good or better with more than half very good or excellent, resulting in very good achievement
- Relationships between teachers and students are very good and this contributes to the quality of learning
- Teachers' high expectations and students' very positive attitudes contribute to successful teaching and learning

Commentary

35. The strengths observed in main school lessons were also apparent in the sixth form. The best features of teaching were its high pace, focus and challenge, with very good structure and sequence of activities. Many of the best lessons started with the learning intentions being shared with the class, followed by appropriate learning activities. Teachers make sure students are familiar with what they need to do to maximise their success in coursework and examinations. The quality of relationships supports the sharing of high expectations for what can be achieved.
36. Learning is very effective because staff are confident, have expert knowledge and enjoy teaching their subjects. Students are encouraged to work at a good pace in lessons. They have a good knowledge of their progress because of an effective system of grading and marking of their work. Past papers are used very well to ensure tasks have the correct standard of difficulty. Higher and lower attaining students alike are provided with good support for their learning.
37. In a very good Year13 English lesson, students showed great independence and commitment to their studies as they made comparisons of texts by John Humphrys and Mosim Ali. The teacher's informed presentation of the extracts was excellent, resulting in very highly motivated students who strove to achieve maximum benefit from the lesson. The work was stimulating and yet carefully focused on what was required in examinations. The students had to think about the examiner's requirements, and their specific responses to each expectation. The outcome was very good progress and achievement by a large group of A-level students who enjoyed their learning.
38. Within a very good overall picture, minor weaknesses were observed on occasion. Some teachers' explanations did not go into sufficient detail to enable students to gain a clear step-by-step understanding; occasionally the level of detail was too great, which some students found a little daunting.
39. The quality of teaching and learning has improved since the previous inspection and assessment is now effective. Overall, there has been very good improvement.

The curriculum

Pupils follow a broad and balanced curriculum that provides good opportunities for all, enriched by a good range of extra-curricular opportunities. Specialist science college status has brought benefits to pupils, both within science and in the wider curriculum. Staffing and accommodation are good overall. The college is resourced adequately, with some very positive features.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum is reviewed regularly, which helps the college respond to pupils' needs
- Pupils' personal development is promoted well through a good, structured course
- Good extra-curricular provision provides a range of opportunities for social and academic enrichment
- The curriculum content is unsatisfactory in art for Years 7 to 9
- The science status has impacted positively on curriculum development

Commentary

40. The curriculum provision is good overall for all pupils and contributes to their good achievement. The regular biannual review results in extending the opportunities for pupils. Recent innovations have led to improvements in the way ICT is taught, through the use of interactive whiteboards, and to the introduction of the health and social care vocational course. Curriculum provision is very good in English, science and history. Provision for modern foreign languages is good, with pupils up to the age of fourteen able to study two languages, French and German.

41. Appropriate time is given for the teaching of the majority of subjects except for physical education in Years 7 to 9 where pupils have two lessons of fifty minutes, which is slightly less curriculum time than suggested by national guidance. This does restrict what teachers and pupils are able to achieve, to some extent.
42. The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 has been enhanced with the provision of vocational subjects of ICT and health and social care, together with an accredited course for low attaining pupils. All pupils now take an examination course in ICT and follow either a full- or short-course GCSE in religious education. These are improvements since the last report. The impact of being a specialist science college has extended the opportunities for all pupils to take additional science qualifications. Classes are run after school so that pupils are able to study all three science subjects if they wish. A number of lower attaining pupils also have the option to follow the 'science plus' course, which leads to additional certification, as well as the double-award GCSE course followed by the vast majority. The success of the curriculum in geography is restricted to a certain extent due to limited opportunities for pupils to pursue fieldwork.
43. Pupils with special educational needs are catered for effectively because teachers plan work well for the range of abilities, although there are variations in the use of individual education plans. Some pupils are taught in smaller groups and receive very good support from specialist teachers and teaching assistants. These staff know pupils well, and their individual needs, and enjoy excellent relationships with them. As a result of science college status, gifted and talented pupils are now extended through additional classes in science and mathematics and during the summer school, which takes place before the pupils arrive at the college for the start of Year 7.
44. The PSHE programme, taught within the form structure, is good and follows a local education authority framework. Form tutors know the pupils well. An appropriate citizenship course and careers education form part of the PSHE programme and, in Year 11, pupils have the opportunity to meet with the Connexions careers advisor. Regular assemblies contribute to pupils' social and moral development. The college does not provide a daily act of collective worship.
45. Extra-curricular provision is good, providing an interesting range of enrichment activities. Sports feature prominently, along with activities in art, music and drama. Pupils are also able to take additional vocational qualifications such as a Red Cross accreditation in baby-sitting. An active homework club, which takes place in the library, provides good support facilities for pupils and many departments run additional study sessions for examination classes at appropriate times of the year.
46. The college is staffed with knowledgeable and suitably experienced teachers and support staff in almost all curriculum areas. The previous difficulties with recruitment are much reduced as the college has taken positive steps to attract well-qualified teachers to the college. This has resulted in improvements in pupils' standards across the college. However, the absence of a main curriculum leader in art is impacting on pupils' achievement, particularly in Years 7 to 9, because not all aspects are being covered in sufficient depth.
47. Adequate classroom resources support the requirements of the curriculum, with some very good aspects. As a result of the specialist status, twenty-two interactive whiteboards have been installed in separate teaching rooms. The recently refurbished ICT suites have vastly improved the provision for teaching this subject. The library is roomy, bright and attractive. It is very well organised and run. Pupils appreciate what is available and treat it with respect. Borrowing rates are satisfactory, but heavily dependent on fiction. The stock is not adequate, despite a good range of readers for younger pupils. Capitation is low for a school

of this size. The library has good computer facilities and pupils of all ages make sensible use of Internet access to research information.

48. Accommodation is mostly of a good quality. The building is light and airy with wide corridors and this enables pupils to move comfortably around the college. Recently added new buildings make accommodation for design and technology, English and physical education very good. A new building is soon to be occupied and this will provide much needed additional teaching facilities and provide science laboratory resources for local primary schools as part of the science college strategy for development. The Astro turf area will enable the teaching of a wide variety of physical education skills to take place all the year round. There are also plans for a well-stocked new library. Most pupils have to use the main hall for eating at break and lunchtime because no other area is available. This eliminates a very useful teaching area for two-thirds of the teaching day. Access for pupils with physical disabilities is very good.
49. The curriculum has improved in its breadth since the previous report because of the developments in ICT accreditation and vocational courses. The organisation of the religious education curriculum is now better than six years ago.

Sixth form

The sixth form curriculum suits the needs and aspirations of the students well.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A good range of academic courses is provided, supplemented by good extra-curricular opportunities
- All students follow a general studies programme which is beneficial to their personal development
- There are insufficient books in the library to support some sixth form courses

Commentary

50. The curriculum provides a range of AS and A-level courses, and cooperative arrangements with a neighbouring school are beneficial in extending further the opportunities for students. To broaden students' personal development, a general studies course is provided for all, which incorporates religious education and careers.
51. A range of enrichment activities is provided to support students' learning in several subjects. Teachers are very committed to extending the provision for students. The mathematics department offers further examination courses as an extra-curricular activity and history teaches a very flexible syllabus, which meets students' needs by providing three alternative ways of taking the examination. During the inspection week, a biology lesson carried on until 6 p.m. to enable students to continue with their coursework.
52. Students who join the sixth form are taught by the same staff that teach in the main school and they use the majority of the same rooms and resources; this is appreciated by students. They have good access to computers. However, there are limited facilities for private study and the range and quantity of books in the library is not sufficient to support all sixth form courses.

Care, guidance and support

The provision for health, safety, care and welfare is very good. Systems for support, advice and guidance are good. Involvement of pupils through seeking, valuing and acting on their views is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There are high levels of care and concern for pupils' welfare and pupils feel that they can turn to adults working in college if they are worried
- Pupils with particular difficulties have very good support
- Pupils understand their targets and generally receive good advice about how well they are doing; this is not consistent across all departments
- Induction arrangements for new pupils are good
- The college values the views of pupils

Commentary

53. The college believes everyone has equal worth and staff work hard to meet the needs of all pupils. Teachers and support staff know the pupils very well and they work closely with outside agencies concerned with pupils' welfare. For example, pupils who have emotional and behavioural difficulties are nurtured sensitively by a member of the in-school support service. The college hosts fortnightly inter-agency meetings to ensure that pupils who have particular personal challenges are closely monitored and supported very well.
54. The headteacher has received relevant training in child protection and carries out his duties effectively. Adults working in college are well aware of procedures and know how to report any concerns. The college has good arrangements for pupils in public care. The procedures for first aid are very good. The full-time first-aider is supported by eighteen members of staff who are qualified in first aid. Pupils who are ill or injured receive very good care in a well-equipped medical room. The arrangements for recording accidents and administering medication are very good. Staff ensure that pupils work in a healthy and safe environment. Risk assessments are undertaken and the premises manager is vigilant of any potential risks to pupils' safety. Appropriate arrangements are in place for testing electrical equipment and emergency evacuations.
55. Pupils have a good and trusting relationship with a variety of teachers and are happy to discuss both academic and personal issues as these arise. Form tutors have a key role, as do other members of the pastoral and senior management team. The very good

relationships extend to subject teachers and lead to good progress in lessons. Induction arrangements for new pupils are good. Pupils say that they settle in quickly because of the help they receive from their form tutors. Pupils also value the help they receive from the college's senior prefects. Arrangements for careers support are satisfactory with the local Connexions service providing both personal interviews and group teaching.

56. Pupils receive good support in most subjects, with usually clear advice and guidance for improving their work. The college has developed a very good central system for collating information about pupils' attainments and achievements. However, this information is not being used consistently to evaluate and improve teaching and learning. Pupils are very aware of their National Curriculum levels in English, science and humanities, and teachers use the available information about pupil capabilities effectively to set individual improvement targets. In mathematics and modern foreign languages, there is little reference to individual targets and the available information is not used effectively in planning for progression.
57. Pupils have an effective voice through the year councils and the student council. They are keen to bring about improvements in the college environment and also organise fundraising events for local and international charities. In lessons, teachers listen and act upon pupils' views and pupils are given some good opportunities to evaluate their own work and decide on what they should aim for next.

Sixth form

Provision for support, advice and guidance is very good. Involvement of students through seeking, valuing and acting on their views is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students have very good relationships with staff and feel that they can ask for help if they have concerns
- Staff give students very good guidance about their work and options on leaving the sixth form
- Students' opinions are taken into account and their views acted upon

Commentary

58. Although a considerable minority of students who completed the pre-inspection questionnaires stated that they had concerns about support, guidance and relationships, the inspection team found no evidence to support this. Discussions with students and observations in lessons highlighted student support and guidance to be a strength of the sixth form. One typical statement from a student was, *'If we have a problem, staff are there for us.'*
59. Students benefit from the close monitoring and support of both form tutors and subject teachers. Guidance on which advanced level courses to take is appreciated by students and they are well prepared for university applications, as well as opportunities for training and employment. One student spoke of how she had not planned to go to university but, after guidance from the college, now has several offers to study English and feels confident about her future.
60. Students feel that their views matter and staff listen to their opinions. The members of the sixth form council organise social events such as the sixth form ball as well as make valuable contributions to improve the life of the college.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The college's links with parents, the community and with other schools are all good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The college has developed close cooperation with parents and is encouraging them to share its high expectations for its pupils
- Partnerships with local employers and outside agencies are well developed and beneficial to pupils
- Valuable links are being established with the local primary schools, which help pupils to make a smooth transition from one stage of education to another
- Reports to parents do not always give enough information about how pupils can improve their work and are not consistent across departments

Commentary

61. Sir Harry Smith is becoming increasingly popular amongst parents and many local families are now choosing to send their children there. This is because the college is working with some considerable success to promote the aspirations it has for its pupils, and parents' confidence in the college is growing. Parents are made to feel welcome and teachers and pastoral staff often contact pupils' homes, not only to discuss concerns but also to celebrate successes.
62. Parents are given satisfactory information about their children's progress. Interim reports give a useful snapshot of how their children are getting on, but the annual reports do not always give parents enough information about what their children should be aiming for next. Subject departments use different grading systems for informing parents about how well their children are doing and this can be confusing.
63. The college encourages parents to support their children at home and invites them to information and guidance meetings about Year 10 options and how parents can help with GCSE revision. Newsletters keep them informed about essential dates and events. These are infrequent, however, and do not fully highlight the college's many successes. Parents are asked about their views and recently they have responded to consultation about uniform and the timing of the college day.
64. Links with local employers are proving to be beneficial through partnerships that enhance pupils' understanding of the world of work. Pupils are offered a useful work experience placement and employers organise useful industry days in college for pupils to find out about different types of work. Local employers come in to help pupils learn how to present themselves and their talents, through a series of mock interviews. The college has a system of 'drop-in centres' and pupils are able to meet and seek advice with outside agencies such as the youth service and school nurse. The success of the college in developing links is evident through the community's support in gaining specialist college status.
65. There are good and improving links with local primary schools. Year 6 pupils start topics in their last term at primary school, which are completed in Year 7 and this aids the pupils' smooth transition. Year 6 pupils with special educational needs receive very good preparation for the transfer from one stage of their education to the next. A science teacher has recently started taking lessons at a primary school, sharing expertise with teachers and pupils. Year 6 pupils gain experience of using specialist equipment in lessons at the college and a pond has recently been completed for fieldwork by the primary schools.

Sixth form

Cooperation with a local school is very good and a good partnership has been formed with the community.

Main strengths

- The relationship with a local school provides valuable curriculum opportunities which facilitates the operation of a successful sixth form at Sir Harry Smith

- Links with local organisations help with students' personal and career development

Commentary

66. The college's very good relationships with a neighbouring secondary school result in significant benefits for post-16 students. The heads of the two sixth forms work very closely together to enable students to access a greatly extended range of courses and thereby enhance their opportunities. Practical arrangements, such as times and transport, have also been thought through very carefully for the benefit of students.
67. Students are keen to think of others and undertake voluntary work through organisations such as Millennium Volunteers and Sports Leadership. Aspects of citizenship are enhanced by visits, for example to the magistrates' court and through taking part in the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Governance, the leadership of the headteacher and leadership of senior staff are very good. Overall management of the college is good.

The college is not fulfilling its statutory obligations to provide a daily act of collective worship and to report pupils' progress in citizenship.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher's leadership is focused on improvement and raising achievement
- Governors are very effective and know the college's strengths and weaknesses
- Senior staff provide very strong leadership in implementing the vision for the future success of the college
- Not all middle managers are effective in ensuring that college policies are implemented in subject departments

Commentary

68. The headteacher provides very strong and effective leadership. His inspiration was a major factor in achieving specialist college status. He is very well supported by members of the senior management team, who share his vision to improve the quality of teaching and learning in the college. The involvement of senior leaders in the development of the teaching and learning group has resulted in an innovative approach to staff development. Senior leaders are good role models for all the staff through their teaching and high-profile presence around the college in corridors and classrooms. Delegation of responsibilities to middle managers, with necessary authority to see them through, is promoting effective teamwork towards shared goals. The relationship between the headteacher and staff is both warm and constructively critical, in an atmosphere of mutual respect.
69. The governing body makes a major contribution to the leadership of the college and contributes strongly to the vision and drive for improvement. It supports the headteacher in planning and setting priorities. Governors understand the strengths and shortcomings of the college and ask challenging questions about its performance. Appropriate performance targets are set for the headteacher. The governing body also produces the college's handbook guidance for new members of staff. This is an exceptional example of 'hands-on' governance, which exemplifies the commitment to the college. Understandably, therefore, they provide a voice, which is willingly listened to by the headteacher. Governors are linked with subjects and they regularly visit the college to meet with subject leaders. The governors' curriculum committee is well informed about the curriculum through presentations from heads of department and appropriate line managers.
70. All key policies are now in place, including monitoring of the curriculum, but a daily act of collective worship is not consistently available to all pupils. Also, the requirement to report on citizenship to parents is not yet fulfilled.
71. The college's strategic planning, as contained in the improvement plan, reflects a coherent approach, with a clear vision for the future of the college. The plan is focused on improving teaching and learning and raising aspirations of pupils. The priorities identified are appropriate and success criteria are clear, to allow checking on progress towards the goals.
72. Comprehensive procedures for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of teaching and learning have been introduced with the college's 'quality monitoring system'. Effective delegation of responsibility for observing lessons, marking and planning has been passed to middle managers, who are given the time and resources to carry out their duties. However, some inconsistencies still continue with the marking of pupils' work, the use of assessment data and the application of the literacy policy.

73. Leadership of special educational needs provision is very good. There are clear lines of responsibility and the very good team of teaching assistants are well organised and appropriately deployed. Statutory procedures are fully met and the very good multi-agency links are firmly focused on serving the needs of all pupils. The integration of pupils with physical disabilities is a strength of the college.
74. Performance management is very well organised. Objectives are set for all teachers and these are considered closely in setting individual and departmental training needs. The objectives set under performance management reflect whole school priorities and are based on raising pupils' achievement.
75. The college is committed to the training of new teachers, particularly via the graduate teacher programme, and trainees are well supported by the college. Induction arrangements for new staff, including newly qualified teachers, are very comprehensive and effective. Newly appointed teachers are very appreciative of the level of support and guidance they receive.

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	2,983,942
Total expenditure	2,683,942
Expenditure per pupil	2,982

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	141,401
Balance carried forward to the next	300,000

76. Procedures for the financial management of the college are very good. The headteacher and governors have a very clear grasp of spending, and resources are clearly linked to the development priorities identified in the college's improvement plan. Procedures for the control of finances are effective, with careful monitoring of expenditure. A large surplus has been carried over from the 2003 / 2004 budget, which is clearly committed to a future building priority with the full knowledge and approval of the governing body. The college sticks to the principles of best value in its allocation of resources and funding and uses benchmark data provided by the local authority to compare its own spending with that of other schools.
77. Improvement in leadership and management of the college since the last inspection has been good. The strengths identified at that time have been consolidated. Significant progress has been made in the effective monitoring of teaching and learning. The college improvement plan is now an effective and focused document, identifying priorities to guide the development of the college towards its vision.

Sixth form

The sixth form benefits from very good leadership and it is very well managed. Governance is very good. The governors have identified resolving uncertainties over the designation of the sixth form as the main area for development.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher, senior managers and the head of sixth form are a very effective team
- Leadership in most sixth form subjects is highly effective
- The headteacher, supported by governors, is focusing on resolving problems that stem from the college's designation as an 11-16 school; current uncertainties are affecting the scope for future development

Commentary

78. As in the main school, leadership of the sixth form is very good. The importance of the sixth form to the future of the college is recognised and a clear vision for its future is articulated and promoted.
79. Procedures for tracking students' progress and the use of data to set targets and analyse performance are very comprehensive and effective, as are the procedures for care, guidance and support. Monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning in the sixth form are developing under the college's quality monitoring procedures, but need further attention to have full effect.
80. The college works very closely and very effectively with the neighbouring secondary school to share sixth form provision. Students in the sixth form are based at the college but travel to the other school for courses. The timetable and shared provision is very well managed to allow this to happen smoothly. The shared arrangement adds significantly to the range of courses available to students and enriches the sixth form curriculum. The college receives finances for its sixth form students from its partner school and these are identified clearly and separately from the financial management of the main school. As a consequence, the sixth form is funded appropriately.
81. Sir Harry Smith Community College is only recognised by central governments' Department for Education and Skills and the Learning Skills Council as providing education for pupils aged 11 to 16. The very good sharing and financial arrangements with the neighbouring school have, however, enabled the college sixth form to grow and prosper over a period of ten years. What is provided meets the local needs of the students and their parents. A very good centre for post-16 students has been established which is raising aspirations and expectations. This leaves the college in a difficult position over areas such as building developments for the sixth form (as it is perceived not to have any), and communication with parents, for example over matters such as which school should send out questionnaires to parents about this OfSTED inspection. A number of areas of uncertainty surround the issue of which governors have overall responsibility for the sixth formers based at the college.
82. The existence of the sixth form is a significant aide to the success of the school in many areas, but uncertainty over the age-range designation for the college is a significant barrier to further developments.

OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES

Work-related learning

Provision in work related learning is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils are able to apply their key skills to real-world situations effectively
- Pupils who take vocational subjects achieve well
- Careers provision is well planned
- Whilst staff across the college are involved in work-related learning, they do not always appreciate how this aspect can be taught in their own subject

Commentary

83. Work-related learning is included as part of the college's personal development programme. Pupils use their abilities to communicate, to solve problems and use ICT in the specific tasks they are set to complete. They acquire the information needed to make informed option choices, make careful decisions about career pathways and learn about the skills needed to be successful in the workplace.

84. The Connexions adviser links with tutors in providing a wide-ranging programme of careers advice. This is complemented effectively by the successful work experience that all pupils do in Year 10. The preparation for it, and debriefing afterwards, is a strong feature. Most teachers have undergone training to teach using the 'Real Game'; pupils choose imaginary careers and are then led through a sequence of consequences that effectively shows them the results of their decisions.
85. Pupils can choose from a range of vocational courses in Years 10 and 11 – applied ICT, business studies and health and social care at GCSE, and a GNVQ in ICT. In the vocational course focused on in this inspection, health and social care, teaching was very effective and pupils achieved very well.
86. No audit of existing classroom activities that relate to the world of work has taken place. This is a missed opportunity to build on, and disseminate, present good practice. Systems to assess pupils' work are emerging as the new course is taught. The co-ordinator is planning to monitor and evaluate provision for work-related learning as it nears the end of its first year as a statutory requirement. Leadership and management of work-related learning, at this early stage in its implementation, are satisfactory.

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 very good.

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

Leadership	Excellent
Management	Excellent
Progress since previous inspection	Very good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Inspirational leadership has helped to drive standards up considerably
- Pupils learn very well because teaching is consistent and stimulating
- English classrooms are seen by pupils as places where it is 'cool to learn'
- More able pupils achieve notably well, as do lower attainers
- Boys' literature performance at GCSE is below that in language

Commentary

Examination results

87. English results in the 2004 national tests taken at the end of Year 9 are in dispute and cannot be reported. They were unreliable in terms of showing how well pupils were doing. The 2003 results were above the national average and better than the results achieved in schools with a similar pupil intake. Girls performed better than boys. At GCSE, the college has a policy of entering as many pupils as possible for both English language and English literature. In 2004, language and literature results were well above the national average. Pupils, especially average attaining boys, tended to do less well in literature than in language. A notable feature was the performance of higher attaining pupils, especially in English language, in terms of the proportion gaining the highest A*/A grades.

Standards and achievement

88. Pupils' starting point in Year 7 is just at the national average but by Year 9 they have made very good progress. Higher attaining pupils write confidently and at length in a wide range of styles. They have learnt to integrate techniques into their work, for instance skilled use of the structure of sentences and essays, to create effects. They show a growing ability to write in an appropriate, impersonal style. Average attaining pupils use and control a good range of styles, and show some ability to predict and infer when studying texts, some of which are really demanding. Length of work is sometimes substituted for quality and accuracy. Lower attaining pupils work hard and neatly. Vocabulary range and variety of sentence lengths are good, as is the awareness of the need to try for differing styles in analysis, summary, diary and descriptive pieces. In longer pieces, the overall structure of the piece often gets lost. Lower attaining pupils, including those with special educational needs, invariably gain higher levels than their potential on entry to the college would have suggested.
89. In Years 10 and 11, control, confidence and accuracy are features of the work of higher attainers. Comparisons of texts and awareness of their historical and cultural context are

strengths. The work of average attainers is very thorough and competent, showing secure English accuracy and an ability to interest the reader. The work done by boys on such tasks as media and creative writing is better than that for literature, where ideas are not examined in sufficient depth. The work of lower attaining pupils is generally accurate. Ideas are clearly expressed. Descriptive and personal writing are better than essays requiring analysis, in which there is a tendency to state opinion rather than explain or justify it. Pupils in all years have good speaking and very good listening skills and use pair and class discussion well. They are alert to the need to try to give answers and state opinions in sentences of Standard English.

Teaching and learning

90. Teaching is very good, particularly in Years 10 and 11. Teachers clearly want pupils to do well. They quickly and consistently create a classroom atmosphere where what is expected in terms of work, approach and behaviour is totally clear and readily accepted. Pupils behave very well. They are well prepared, very attentive, and respect the work and help which is on offer. In this climate, the energy and attention of both teacher and pupil can focus on learning. Pupils are given clear guidelines and then given the chance to show initiative and independence within them. As a result they perform well in pairs and groups, and happily accept those situations where silent or individual work is required. This is apparent even with younger pupils, those in Year 7 library lessons having already learnt to cooperate and use their time productively so that the teacher can give quality help to individuals or small groups. Teachers choose tasks, and the methods by which pupils will learn, with close attention to what best suits the class, and ability groups within it. Whilst the purpose of a lesson is always clear, on some occasions teachers do not sufficiently explain to pupils how what they are doing fits in with it, making the learning more vague and fragmented. Marking is detailed, regular and very helpful, with pupils being given very clear guidance about how to improve. In a few instances, grades given were too generous, leading pupils to misunderstand their achievement.

Leadership and management

91. Inspirational leadership and management generate a rare consistency and ambition within the department. Clear, detailed, and unfussy administration guides teachers in precisely what is to be done and how. There is a strong sense of team spirit, and shared responsibility and support. Enthusiasm and belief in what pupils can and should achieve abound. Classrooms are bright, highly organised and stimulating. There has been very good improvement since the previous inspection, evident in the rise in standards, teaching quality, and pupil response.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

92. In subjects other than English, pupils show literacy skills which are average. On entry to Year 7, they have below average writing skills. Their ability to read aloud or for basic information is average, but their interest in reading and ability to appreciate what they are reading is less secure. Listening skills are above average, and pupils' speaking is average but confident and willing. Good systems identify pupils' literacy weaknesses. There is regular, very good structured support to build the literacy skills of those most needing help. However, literacy targets within the individual education plans for pupils are too vague to help teachers adjust work appropriately. A working group, under the guidance of English staff, has looked at literacy for several years. Much work has been undertaken under the guidance of English teachers, in the 'language for learning' initiative. Strategies to improve literacy skills have affected some classroom work. Across the college, however, there is a lack of consistency within and across departments. Literacy is not accepted as a whole-school priority and responsibility. As a result, the good ideas being generated have limited impact on pupils' achievement. Key words are displayed in classrooms and are well used in

science but not emphasised enough in design and technology and geography. Technical terms are well taught in subjects like history and mathematics, but their misspelling is often ignored in written work. Good use of oral work helps pupils to understand topics in design and technology, physical education and history. Pupils do not get enough chance to talk about their ideas in religious education; in physical education they are not expected to use technical terms when evaluating their performance.

French and German

All pupils study either French or German in Year 7. In Years 8 and 9 all pupils study both French and German. At the end of Year 9, pupils elect to continue with either one or both languages.

Provision in French and German is good.

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

Leadership	Good
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- All pupils in Years 8 and 9 study two foreign languages and achieve well
- Pupils in Years 10 and 11 are prepared well for the GCSE examinations
- Teachers have very good subject knowledge
- Very good use is made of ICT and the electronic whiteboard
- Teacher assessments of pupils' National Curriculum levels in Year 9 are unrealistically low

Commentary

Examination results

93. GCSE results in French in 2004 were above the national average and were significantly higher than those in 2003. In German, GCSE results in 2004 were also significantly better than 2003 but were below the national average. The cohort of pupils entered for the French GCSE contained a significantly higher proportion of higher attaining pupils than that entered for German. Teacher assessments of National Curriculum levels in Year 9 were well below average in 2004 and do not reflect the standards observed. There is a lack of rigour in assessment in Years 7 to 9.

Standards and achievement

94. By the end of Year 9, standards observed in German were just above average and average in French. Pupils have a reasonably wide working vocabulary, speak and read with good pronunciation and accents, have developed listening skills and are starting to use a variety of tenses in their work. Speaking skills in German are stronger than in French because pupils have more opportunity to practise oral work in lessons. Overall in Years 7 to 9, pupils make good progress. Standards observed in both French and German in Year 11 were above average. Pupils have a wide working vocabulary, express their opinions, ideas and emotions using a variety of tenses and speak with increasing confidence and assurance. Pupils take pride in their written work and the quality of their coursework preparation for GCSE is good. They make good progress and their achievement is good because of the good teaching they receive.

Teaching and learning

95. In both French and German, teaching is good and promotes good learning. Teachers in both languages have very good subject knowledge and use the target language well in lessons to promote good listening skills and present good role models to the pupils. Only occasionally is English used unnecessarily in teaching. Good and regular use is made of

ICT to support teaching and promote independent learning. Some very good and imaginative use of an electronic whiteboard was observed in German, to bring language learning to life and engage the pupils' interest and attention. Lessons are well planned and conducted at good pace with a variety of activities to keep pupils on task and motivated. Where the pace dropped, pupils' interest soon waned and learning suffered as a consequence. In Years 10 and 11 pupils are well prepared for the GCSE examinations in French and German and know what they need to do to achieve the best possible grade of which they are capable. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are positive because of the interesting teaching they receive. Relationships between teachers and pupils are supportive and respectful and pupils are confident in contributing to lessons. Teachers use assessment information to analyse pupils' performance and to aid lesson planning. In both languages, but particularly in French, the quality of marking of pupils' work is inconsistent, not always giving pupils a clear idea of what they need to do to improve.

Leadership and management

96. Leadership presents a good, professional role model, which is concerned to explore ways of improving teaching and learning. Effective teamwork is promoted and observable in similar approaches to teaching and learning in French and German. Departmental documents and policies contained in the handbook are comprehensive and useful. Priorities identified in the department development plan are appropriate, reflect the college priorities and have success criteria to enable evaluation and monitoring. Assessment in Years 7 to 9 is insufficiently rigorous to allow realistic definition of teacher assessments for National Curriculum levels in Year 9. Commitment to the teaching of modern languages is evident in the provision of two languages for all pupils in Years 8 and 9. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. The issues identified at that time have been tackled. Particular improvements have been achieved in the quality of teaching and learning in Years 10 and 11 and GCSE results in French and German have improved. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed and the quality of teaching and learning is now effectively monitored and evaluated.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is good.

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

Leadership	Very good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well as a result of their positive attitudes and teachers' high expectations
- Leadership provides a drive to focus continually on improving standards
- There is very good analysis of performance data to give a picture of pupils' standards
- Pupils have examination targets but they are not given sufficient guidance towards achieving them

Commentary

Examination results

97. Results at the end of Year 9 have shown a general upward trend over the past four years and were a little above the average in 2004. Results compare favourably with those of pupils from similar

schools. In 2004, boys did better than girls although the results of boys and girls tend to vary considerably, reflecting the variation in intake. Year 11 results in 2004 at GCSE were above average and were a considerable improvement on the previous year, particularly the proportion of pupils achieving GCSE grade C. Boys did better than girls.

Standards and achievement

98. Pupils join the college with average mathematical skills, knowledge and understanding. By the end of Year 9 standards are broadly average. Overall, most pupils have made better progress than would be expected and achieve well. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well. For example, a Year 9 low attaining class attained standards of work in coordinate geometry which were better than normally expected. The high work rate of the pupils contributed to their good achievement. Higher attaining pupils also make good progress and are able to tackle more difficult problems such as using 'trial and improvement' to solve cubic equations. Standards at the end of Year 11 are above average and are partly a result of teaching increasingly focused on examination performance. Attitudes to work are good and pupils at all levels achieve well. Middle and low attaining pupils are able effectively to tackle more difficult problems, for example in probability, and higher attaining pupils more demanding mathematical topics in trigonometry and algebra.

Teaching and learning

99. Teaching and learning are good in all years but slightly better in Years 10 and 11 than in Years 7 to 9. Teachers are making increasingly effective use of the new interactive whiteboards. These 'grab' pupils' attention and are used well to provide effective starter activities and a very visual approach to the work. Emphasis is placed on correct terminology and key words are often written into exercise books and displayed around the classroom walls. Sometimes teaching does not react as effectively as it could to pupils' answers. Teachers press on with the prepared lesson rather than adjust and respond to these answers. For example, an otherwise good lesson on gradients of lines, which pupils found difficult, needed more reinforcement before moving onto the next stage of considering y-axis intercepts. Teachers prepare challenging materials and have high expectations of what pupils can do and achieve. The setting system helps this process, but these arrangements do not always make sufficient allowance to challenge further the small number of gifted and talented pupils. A considerable amount of time and attention is given to supporting all pupils with their work. Those with special education needs are served well with very effective additional support from teaching assistants. The college has good marking systems and provides grade targets for all pupils. However, these are not routinely used during lessons or consistently related to the work being done. Pupils are given insufficient guidance to help them reach their personal targets.

Leadership and management

100. The department has built an effective team of teachers committed to continued improvement. Schemes of work are well prepared. There is an extensive programme of out-of-lesson activities, including workshop sessions for pupils who need to improve and additional examination classes for pupils doing statistics in Year 11. Other activities effectively enrich and enhance the good curriculum. Very good use is made of pupil performance data to evaluate the progress made by the department. The effective practice of many teachers in the department is not yet shared as widely as it could be.

Mathematics across the curriculum

101. Overall, pupils are making good use of their mathematical knowledge to support their work in several subjects. Examples were seen in geography where pupils were doing block charts of population size and using grids to measure areas of towns to calculate population statistics. In art, ratios and median lines were used to divide pictures to get correct proportions of facial features. English was using time graphs to analyse the content of plays. In science, numerical problems are

set and tables, graphs and charts are used to represent experimental data. Pupils' mathematical skills are average across the curriculum.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is good.

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

Leadership	Very good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Very good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A focus on GCSE requirements, and the recall and understanding of key ideas, results in good achievement in Years 10 and 11
- Some excellent teaching captures the interest of pupils of all abilities and learning is very effective in these lessons
- Teaching is unsatisfactory at times, which results in pupils misbehaving and underachieving; insufficient emphasis is placed on investigative work and the use of ICT in some classes
- The range of courses is very good for pupils in Years 10 and 11, and they are very well planned
- Very effective leadership is resulting in a strong team spirit in the department and continual improvement

Commentary

Examination results

102. Results in Year 9 national tests in science show an upward trend of improvement over the past five years. In 2004, the pupils' attainment was broadly average and results were in line with those in similar schools. These outcomes signify good progress over time and good achievement, as pupils' standards on entry into Year 7 have been a little below average in science. The proportion of pupils attaining A*-C grades, at 50 per cent in 2004, is similar to the national average of 52 per cent. These results were higher than in 2003. All pupils entered for the GCSE examinations in 2004 gained an A*-G pass, a particularly good outcome for some of the lower attaining pupils.

Standards and achievement

103. The broad judgements of 'average standards' in Years 9 and 11 represent a great range of attainment seen in different classes, which is dependent upon the pupils' capabilities and the quality of teaching they experience. In individual lessons, pupils' achievements varied between excellent and unsatisfactory, with more of the higher quality lessons in Years 10 and 11. In the best lessons, highly motivated pupils work as hard as they can to do well. Scrutiny of pupils' books shows some work of high quality in physics, chemistry and biology. Work of an A/A* standard was apparent, for example, on polymerisation and balancing equations and the effect of surface area to volume ratios. Where investigative tasks, including prediction and fair testing, receive less emphasis than they might, pupils' understanding in these areas is lower than their recall of factual information and appreciation of key ideas. Technical language is well known by the pupils as a result of effective reinforcement in lessons, and pupils show good use of number in GCSE calculations. Pupils with special educational needs when supported by specialist staff make very good progress, and they generally do well. Boys and girls are doing equally well in science.

Teaching and learning

104. Teachers have good subject knowledge, which they use well in most cases to interest and motivate pupils, who then learn well. The setting system works effectively in Years 8 to 11, with work correctly matched to the capabilities and prior learning of pupils. Interactive white boards are an excellent facility that staff are coming to terms with, using them as a board to write on, and occasionally very effectively with pre-prepared software. The images of the construction of a transformer used in one lesson, for example, were very helpful in developing pupils' understanding. Although technical language is reinforced well, pupils' general oral and written language is not corrected consistently by teachers. Relationships between staff and pupils are usually very good, which results in pupils asking questions with confidence. In the best lessons, open-ended questions were asked, and pupils gave

extended answers, indicating what they did and did not understand. Lessons are usually very well structured, with clear introductions (learning intentions are shared with the pupils), interesting activities and good summarising sections. Good humour is used by staff to help pupils enjoy learning.

105. In Year 7, the lively mixed ability classes did not achieve as well as in the setted classes in other years. Work tended to be planned to meet the needs of the middle attaining pupils and the least and most capable were not taught as successfully. In a few lessons, mainly in Years 7 to 9, pupils' misconceptions were not corrected, for example pupils talking about magnetism when learning about gravity, and teachers' behaviour management skills were weak. In these circumstances, pupils lost respect for the teacher, and misbehaved, disrupting the learning of others.
106. Marking is detailed and thorough in some books; the teachers' comments helped pupils to improve the standard of their work. In other books, ticks and a few comments did little to assist pupils to make progress. Lists of concise targets for each topic, against which the pupils self-assess, are a helpful aid to learning. The quality of teachers' assessments is satisfactory overall.

Leadership and management

107. The majority of pupils follow a double-award science course for GCSE. A few lower attainers also take a science certificate, and those pupils most interested in science can opt to take the three sciences physics, chemistry and biology. This triple-award course has just started in Year 10 and consists of extra specialist lessons each Monday after the end of the school day. Very good schemes of work have been prepared for all the courses taught, which guide teaching staff through the programmes. This curriculum is very good, meeting the needs of all pupils. Assessment data is very well managed centrally in the department, with clear targets for each pupil in each class. Resources are very well organised by a very effective team of technicians, although resources in terms of equipment, ICT and personnel are insufficient for the coming year when A-level courses are set to increase quite substantially. Monitoring of teaching and learning is effective but the quality of teaching remains too wide, as managers are aware. The team spirit in the department is very good, with staff working together for the benefit of the pupils.
108. Since the time of the last inspection, GCSE results have risen, achievement is better and the quality of teaching and learning, and the leadership and management of the department, have improved significantly.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in ICT is good.

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

Leadership	Very good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching and much improved planning is raising achievement for all
- Effective leadership is bringing about rapid improvement
- The use of ICT by teachers to enliven lessons is good but opportunities for pupils to use ICT to support their learning in other subjects are less well developed

- Pupils have gaps in their knowledge because of the relatively late adoption of the national strategy for teaching ICT in Years 7 to 9

Commentary

Examination Results

109. Results in 2004 in the applied GCSE and the short course GCSE were above the national average, though only a minority of pupils took an ICT qualification. All pupils now take an ICT course in Years 10 and 11, leading to an ICT qualification.

Standards and achievement

110. On entry to the college standards are average and pupils in Year 7 are benefiting from experiencing the national strategy from their arrival at the college. Standards are in line with course expectations in terms of the level at which pupils are working but gaps in the breadth of ICT skills are present in Years 8 and 9 because pupils have not benefited from the national strategy until the current academic year. There has been a history of underachievement, which is now being turned around, with rapid improvements during the current academic year. Year 7 pupils achieve well in relation to their abilities. Other year groups are also achieving well in lessons, but are still recovering from previous gaps in knowledge and understanding. By the end of Year 9, pupils can produce PowerPoint presentations that incorporate spreadsheet charts and other text, with clear understanding of their potential audience. In Years 10 and 11, pupils following the applied ICT course have achieved a good level of motivation and interest.

Teaching and learning

111. In Years 7 to 9, lessons are well structured, covering the requirements of the National Curriculum, and pupils learn about ICT in a systematic way. Teachers have good classroom management and very good relationships result in a positive learning environment. In the best lessons, a very strong focus on assessment and the requirements of the examination shows pupils, for example, how they can improve their work to raise the quality from pass to merit level. Learning was usually well planned and taught at a good pace so activities moved smoothly from whole-class teacher led discussion to independent computer work followed by more teacher led activities. This helped to maintain pupils' interest. Some lessons were made interesting by presentations given by a visiting speaker. The class teacher used these to link what was being said to the theory of the subject. For example, the visit of an estate agent enabled the database project in Year 11 to be seen as relevant to the real world and provided a very good vocational focus for the applied GCSE course.

Leadership and management

112. Departmental and college leadership share a very clear vision for development. There has been rapid improvement during the current academic year and pupils are now covering the National Curriculum requirements in all years. Standards are rising. Mentoring is very effective. Very good teaching and learning were seen in the lessons of non-specialist and newly qualified staff. The management has been good in implementing change but there has been insufficient time for the effect of innovations to be seen fully. The infrastructure is much improved but the ratio of pupils to computers is below the national average for secondary schools. Improvement since the last inspection has been good as the National Curriculum is covered and all pupils receive specialised ICT lessons throughout the college.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

113. The use of ICT in subjects is much improved since the last report. Really good examples of the use of ICT were seen in several subjects, including design and technology where digital photography is used alongside desktop publishing to produce high quality coursework, and in English, where pupils use the Internet to research authors and produce word-processed reports. Teachers across the curriculum use data projectors effectively to bring their teaching alive and examples were seen where the interactive whiteboard was used to involve pupils in modern language teaching. Pupils used ICT well for research and to develop their independent learning, but generally ICT is used more by teachers in lessons than by pupils. Pupils' competence is average overall.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is satisfactory.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Average	Average
Achievement	Good	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Good	Satisfactory
Leadership	Good	
Management	Satisfactory	
Progress since previous inspection	Satisfactory	

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Emphasis on geographical enquiry results in many pupils improving their subject skills and making good progress in acquiring knowledge and understanding
- Thoroughly planned lessons, involving varied tasks and resources, are the basis of enjoyable and effective learning but, when teachers give too much input, pupils' achievement is restricted
- Lesson objectives are made clear so that pupils know what they will be learning and why
- Pupils are not always clear what their standard is and what they have to do to improve
- Not enough work meets the needs of higher and lower attaining pupils

Commentary

Examination results

114. Over the last three years, the results of the teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 have declined. In 2004, these were well below average. Girls did much better than boys. GCSE results in 2002 and 2003 were well below the national average. The 2004 results improved to below average. Girls did much better than boys and the difference was far greater than occurred nationally.

Standards and achievement

115. Pupils join the college with knowledge, skills and understanding that are about average. An uncertain time of staff changes had an impact on pupils' progress over recent years but, at the time of the inspection, the picture was more positive and standards seen were at the level expected for each stage. Throughout the college pupils do investigative work; regular homework and assignments provide extension and consolidation. All of this helps to boost pupils' achievement. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well because of good support from teaching assistants and the use of special work booklets. Year 9 pupils are able to describe and explain the climatic features of different areas of Britain and assess the effect upon people's occupations and hobbies. By Year 11, pupils are learning to think and act as geographers and can identify issues, collect and analyse relevant data and draw conclusions. Throughout the college, pupils' numeracy skills enable them to cope with statistics and graphs, but they do not use geographical terms with enough precision or frequency, particularly in Years 10 and 11.

Teaching and learning

116. Lessons begin with a clear explanation of the work to be covered. Good starter activities are used, for example in a Year 9 lesson on world vegetation zones, where pupils' summaries from the previous lesson were read out. A whole-class question and answer session highlighted key points for development. Pupils responded enthusiastically because they had understood from the outset the purpose of the lesson. Teaching continued to be effective only when tasks were sufficiently challenging. For example, in a very good Year 8 physical geography lesson the teacher used sponges and water followed by a high quality interactive whiteboard presentation to make pupils think hard about permeability and limestone pavements. Overall, teachers manage classes satisfactorily. However, behaviour deteriorates and progress stalls when teachers talk too much or when they set work that is not appropriately challenging for higher and lower attaining pupils. Teaching observed was better in Years 7 to 9 than in GCSE classes. No differences were apparent in the teaching of boys and girls.

Leadership and management

117. The new teachers have quickly established a strong team, which is striving to provide pupils with stability after a period of staffing changes. There is clear commitment to managing the

department in order to raise standards. New schemes of work are being introduced as a result of a survey into pupils' individual learning styles but these are not yet fully developed to cater for the mixed ability teaching groups. A very good assessment system is in place for teachers to measure pupil attainment but not all pupils are informed about how well they are doing and how to produce better work. Differences in the performance of girls and boys are not monitored enough and neither are the quality and consistency of written comments used for marking homework. The fieldwork programme does not make provision for all years. Since the last inspection, standards declined for a period but are now rising again. The quality of teaching has improved and so has the use of ICT.

History

Provision in history is very good.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Above average	Above average
Achievement	Good	Very good
Teaching and learning	Good	Very Good
Leadership	Excellent	
Management	Very good	
Progress since previous inspection	Very good	

Main strengths

- Most pupils make very good progress over five years and many reach, or exceed, their predicted grades
- The exemplary leadership has resulted in a determined focus on improvement
- Pupils are very positive, and so they try hard to do well
- History is one of the higher performing subjects

Commentary

Examination results

118. The results of teacher assessments, at the end of Year 9 in 2004, were in line with those reported nationally. These have been broadly average since 2001, except for 2002 when they were above average. GCSE results in 2004 were average, which stopped the declining trend from 2001, when they had been above average.

Standards and achievement

119. Current standards in Years 7 to 9 are above average, as are those in Years 10 and 11, which shows that recent improvements are continuing. Pupils respond very well to teachers' obvious commitment and love of their subject. As a result, the majority achieve their potential grades, as predicted by the college's systems. Over the last four years a significant number exceeded their targets by one grade and some by two. Although in 2004 pupils did relatively better in their other subjects, overall, history remains a very popular option choice because of its track record of achievement. Pupils in Year 10 demonstrated a very good knowledge and understanding of the League of Nations, using ICT with great skill to find additional information. In Year 11, in a discussion on the changing role of women in the 1920s, pupils had very good recall of the relevant facts and were well able to deal with complex questions. Pupils' skills of historical enquiry were as well developed as their recall of information. Standards of written work are less strong for many pupils, but most try hard with good support from teachers.

Teaching and learning

120. Some excellent teaching was seen in all years and none was unsatisfactory. It is slightly more effective in Years 10 and 11, where teachers' understanding of examination requirements is very strong. They use excellent revision booklets and lay consistent, but subtle, stress on practical techniques. All teachers expect pupils' full attention and effort, and in return offer work that is very well planned, sequenced and resourced. It is often both challenging and enjoyable, and varied in content and methods. Pupils are encouraged to learn and to present work in imaginative and interesting ways, using oral, aural and visual skills particularly well. Self-assessment has begun and is still developing.

Leadership and management

121. The department has a positive and rigorous commitment to improvement in standards, and is thoughtful and innovative. It takes a lead in many college initiatives, for example in teaching and learning and in developing citizenship. The department has had stable, specialist staffing since 2003, which is having a positive impact on achievement. Assessment is very well managed and helps pupils to improve their work well and to record their progress through the college. The achievement of pupils with special educational needs is well supported, and gifted and talented pupils' work with local primary schools, as part of their enrichment programme, is exceptional. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good. Teaching in lower years is now consistently good, and ICT is used effectively by pupils and teachers.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is satisfactory.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Average	Average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Leadership	Good	
Management	Satisfactory	
Progress since previous inspection	Good	

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Lessons that generally start well with brisk pace and clear context, gaining pupils' attention and interest, do not always end with the same rigour and effectiveness
- Encouraging, sensitive teaching helps pupils to tackle difficult or controversial topics
- Firm classroom management encourages pupils to behave well
- Many pupils are not clear what their standard is and do not know what they have to do to improve
- High quality resources are used well but are not adapted to meet the learning needs of all pupils

Commentary

Examination results

122. GCSE full course results in 2003 and 2004 were above the national average. GCSE short course results were in line with the national average in 2003 and below in 2004. All pupils follow the long or short course and the majority take examinations.

Standards and achievement

123. When pupils enter the college, standards are around the level expected at that age. Pupils make notable progress during Year 7. The two lessons per week enable good foundations to be laid. Pupils have a balanced experience of learning about religion, and learning from

religion. Achievement is aided by regular homework, independent research, and assignments that consolidate and measure progress. By the end of Year 9, standards meet the expectations of the Locally Agreed Syllabus. Pupils know about attitudes to racism and, through a case study of Martin Luther King, they understand what a Christian viewpoint might be. Present standards in Year 11 are average. Higher attainers write fluently about ethical topics, referring to particular religions and holy books for evidence, and drawing conclusions. Pupils are able to distinguish between rights and responsibilities and know how to evaluate their learning. Those with special educational needs achieve well, when they are supported.

Teaching and learning

124. Where teaching was good, it featured evident enthusiasm from the start, well-planned structure and content, confident management of behaviour, and open questions asked sympathetically. For example in a Year 11 lesson, pupils listened first to a recording of 'Morning has broken', which prepared them for exploring Christian beliefs about creation. Skilful management of a lively group made sure that everyone used relevant information from the Bible and was involved in extended discussion work. Learning was less effective when the teacher's explanations, or the use of resources, became too dominant. Then pupils became passive and did not exert themselves, either because work was too difficult or did not pose a challenge. These situations particularly affected the learning of lower and higher attainers. A number of lessons lacked a clear conclusion or ended with pupils not participating. Assessment is not focused well enough on pupils understanding how well they are doing and knowing how to improve their work.

Leadership and management

125. Leadership has welded together a team of mostly non-specialists to tackle the weaknesses identified at the time of the last inspection. Since then, a thorough revision of schemes of work and policies, and the development of a very good system for assessment, have provided the basis for improvement. There is now a specialist subject co-ordinator, the quality of teaching has improved and standards at the end of Year 9 have been raised. The subject makes a good contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils, through lessons and a variety of enrichment activities. These include visits to places of worship, Christian Union meetings, and visitors like the holocaust survivor who talks to Year 9. Not enough has yet been done to share effective teaching practice or marking methods that provide pupils with constructive help.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

Provision in design and technology is good.

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

Leadership	Very good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good quality teaching enables pupils to work well independently in lessons.
- Relationships are a strength and lead to effective learning
- Assessment is used well to set pupils' targets and monitor progress

- Good planning and teaching of the design process in Year 11 has resulted in improving GCSE results
- Pupils' skills in graphical communication are weaker than in other areas of design and technology and inconsistent practice in Years 7 to 9 affects the quality of design work

Commentary

Examination results

126. The subject consists of graphics, food and resistant materials taught throughout Years 7 to 11. GCSE courses are offered in all three areas. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 were in line with the national average in 2004. Results in GCSE examinations in 2004 were marginally above the national average and were a significant improvement from the previous year.

Standards and achievement

127. Pupils start the college with below average skills in design and technology. However, by the end of Year 9, they have made good progress, have a sound understanding of the subject and use problem-solving approaches well. Year 11 pupils reach an above average standard of work in their design projects. In Years 7 to 11, pupils do less well in graphics because their skills are underdeveloped and work is often inaccurate and untidy. Pupils use ICT well, particularly in Years 10 and 11, to extend their work and improve presentation. They have a wide range of practical skills and they can work safely and use tools very competently in a practical lesson. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress due to the supportive way learning support assistants and teachers understand and meet their individual needs. Gifted and talented pupils have extension work in practical lessons, which expands their knowledge and skills.

Teaching and learning

128. Pupils enjoy practical lessons. They are able to work independently, take pride in their tasks and make quality products. Features of good teaching are the well-structured and briskly paced lessons, which help pupils to concentrate on the task. Teachers use demonstrations very effectively to help raise pupil expectations. A good use of this was seen in a lesson where the pupils make a 'bread-based' product as part of their food project. The teacher effectively showed pupils the skills they needed to practise. Good relations and teachers' help and support encourage pupils to work with enthusiasm and gain success. Assessment is used effectively to help pupils to improve their work. Pupils taking GCSE courses have a target grade and know what they have to do to achieve this. There are limited opportunities for pupils in Years 7 to 9 to develop research skills to underpin design ideas.

Leadership and management

129. There is a strong vision for improving pupils' achievements within the department and structures are in place to support this. Teachers share and build on good teaching practices across all areas of design and technology. Teachers' expertise is used well and teamwork is a strength of the department. The good improvement since the last inspection has been effected by very good leadership.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design and music were focus subjects for inspection; drama was sampled. What was observed in drama was of good quality. Although GCSE results in recent years have been below expectations, staffing changes are having a substantial impact and attainment is now much higher. Standards seen during lessons were above average and pupils made good progress. They are developing drama skills, such as the ability to improvise in groups to a given stimulus with attention to dialogue, character and the physical space. The college is currently unable to offer drama to Year 9 pupils due to teacher shortages. This has the

potential to impact negatively on pupils' standards and on the number of pupils opting for drama in Years 10 and 11. Teaching in the department is well crafted and fast paced with meticulous attention to detail. Pupils are given clear learning targets during lessons with clearly defined criteria to assess their progress and that of their peers. Assessment is very good. Teachers keep detailed records of each pupil's progress and use these to plan appropriate activities for the future. The department is enriching the cultural life of the college with a college production of *Little Shop of Horrors* and a schedule of theatre trips which recently included *A Comedy of Errors*.

Art and design

Provision in art and design is unsatisfactory.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Below average	Below average
Achievement	Unsatisfactory	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Unsatisfactory	Satisfactory

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Unsatisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Unsatisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- In a significant amount of teaching, expectations are low and pupils achieve too little; some teaching is well structured and leads to good learning
- Planning of many lessons is unsatisfactory, with work not carefully matched to pupils' needs
- Assessment of pupils' work is helpful on the GCSE course but, in Years 7 to 9, does not give clear guidance on improvement

Commentary

Examination results

130. GCSE results improved in 2004, compared to those in 2003, but were still below the national average. Boys did less well than girls. The results of teacher assessments, at the end of Year 9 in 2004, were very much lower than those reported nationally, especially for boys.

Standards and achievement

131. Pupils enter the college with average but variable skills and knowledge. In Years 7 to 9, standards are maintained for some but they decline for the majority. This happens when the tasks set in lessons lack challenge. Standards in the present Years 10 and 11 are below average because of unsatisfactory achievement in Year 9 and a low allocation of time for art. However, standards do show some improvement during Years 10 and 11. Teachers give specific guidance, based on GCSE grade criteria, which leads to pupils making satisfactory progress during the course. Pupils with special educational needs achieve in line with other pupils.

Teaching and learning

132. Teaching is unsatisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory on the GCSE course. The majority of pupils in Years 7 to 9 are not given tasks to do that have sufficient demand. An example of unsatisfactory work involved a Year 9 lesson where pupils were taught simple one-point perspective. This concept was subsequently developed into 'city' pictures that did not significantly challenge pupils and resulted in unsatisfactory learning. In contrast, in a Year 7 lesson, pupils were learning well due to better teaching. They learnt how to construct accurately the proportions of the face and were led through incremental steps by well-planned teacher instructions. Homework is set regularly but pupils are not asked to do anything that extends their learning. In most classes, pupils' work is marked but too few constructively critical comments are made which would help pupils to improve. They are not given challenging targets that could assist in achieving higher standards. Pupils that take GCSE art benefit from individual tuition. They receive help, advice and support to complete the work set. However, they do too little observational drawing, which constrains their learning. This skill plays a major part in underpinning several aspects of the course.

Leadership and management

133. The department has suffered from staffing difficulties but senior management intervention has provided a clarity of direction and purpose from which the pupils are benefiting. A drive to improve teaching has resulted in better lesson planning. Methods to tackle other areas for improvement are being employed. There is insufficient monitoring of the day-to-day running of the department, however, with results and outcomes not scrutinised rigorously or analysed for indications of how standards can be raised. Literacy and ICT skills are receiving insufficient focus. Improvement since the previous inspection is unsatisfactory because issues raised then have not been satisfactorily tackled. These include ICT provision for pupils in Years 7 to 9, updating department documentation and getting pupils to experience artwork outside the college.

Music

Provision in music is good.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Average	Average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Satisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Lessons are well structured and questioning techniques are used effectively to reinforce prior learning and challenge pupils
- Relationships at all levels are very positive
- Leadership is enthusiastic and successful in raising the profile of the subject
- There are too few resources and insufficient access to specialised music software

Commentary

Examination results

134. GCSE results for music in 2004 were well below the national average. The Year 9 results were below expectations with boys' performance significantly weaker than that of girls.

Standards and achievement

135. Standards seen during the inspection were higher than those reflected in recent results, showing the impact of staff changes. In Year 7, pupils develop their understanding of composing processes and the manipulation of musical elements, such as timbre and pitch, through analysis of *Peter and the Wolf*. In Year 9, they further develop their rhythmic and ensemble performing skills through a 'stomp' project. In Year 11, pupils perform individual keyboard compositions to others with confidence. They demonstrate a good awareness of melody and keyboard style, using a broad palette of harmonies. Their instrumental and performing skills are mostly as expected for their ages.

Teaching and learning

136. Where teaching is most effective, there is good pace, variety and a lively, enthusiastic interaction between the teacher and pupils in which ideas are discussed and developed. Teaching offers an effective role model, demonstrating performing skills and musical excellence that establish high expectations and aspirations. Good classroom relationships help in creating an open and supportive learning environment where pupils can develop their performing skills with confidence. The taught scheme of work for Years 7 to 9 meets the requirements of the National Curriculum. However, in Years 10 and 11, a lack of access to sequencing software limits the scope of work and disadvantages pupils. The department is supported by a small team of well-qualified instrumental teachers. The use of teaching assistants and a volunteer sixth-form pupil is very effective in supporting teaching and learning. The availability of different materials and activities to provide suitable challenges for all learners, particularly the less able, is limited - there is only one computer for use in the classroom.

Leadership and management

137. Very effective progress has been made recently following staffing changes. A clear vision for the future has been established, and the pupils' enthusiasm, trust and commitment have been captured. The management of support assistants is particularly effective. The music and drama departments are developing an effective partnership. Together they are starting to make a significant contribution to improving the cultural and aesthetic life of the college. The department offers a limited range of extra-curricular activities for pupils, including a band and choir. The capacity of the instrumental staff to rehearse ensembles is currently under-utilised. Few pupils receive instrumental tuition, which is unhelpful in promoting higher standards in music. There has been no progress in the provision of ICT since the last report, although other areas are better.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is good.

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

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Satisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The enthusiasm and commitment of teachers has brought about a marked improvement in GCSE results
- The consistency of approach and lesson structure fosters good relationships and encourages good participation in lessons
- Pupils do not fully understand what they have to do to improve in different activities
- Insufficient emphasis is put on key words and technical vocabulary to help pupils further their understanding and appreciation of sports

Commentary

Examination results

138. The results of teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2004 were below those reported nationally. GCSE results in 2004 were above average and this represents a great improvement from previous years.

Standards and achievement

139. Most pupils enter the college with below average physical skills and many reach an average standard in at least some of the activities by the end of Year 9, although few reach the higher levels. Pupils have average ability in football and netball; they generally know the rules of the games but are sometimes inconsistent in keeping to them. For example, in netball the footwork rule is not always followed in a game situation. Pupils have acquired many of the skills and techniques needed for different sports but cannot always use them appropriately; for example, receiving the ball and making an accurate pass is not always completed successfully. In Year 11, the standards of the present GCSE pupils are average in most activities, indicating good achievement for those pupils. Some have above average skills in striking and fielding in rounders. Standards in the core physical education lessons are also average. Standards of play are generally good in extra-curricular games. Pupils with special educational needs achieve as well as other pupils because teachers know them well and are able to provide tasks to match their needs. For example, in some lessons opportunities are made for a non-ambulant pupil to complete physiotherapy exercises.

Teaching and learning

140. In Years 7 to 9, pupils were given good opportunities to consolidate previous skills. Activities were sometimes not challenging enough to involve the need to learn and develop new skills. Some lessons started well, where pupils were given responsibility to conduct their own warm-up activities. The impetus of the lesson was lost on occasion, when this task was not monitored to ensure that it was completed satisfactorily. In Years 10 and 11, more examples of good and very good teaching were seen, particularly when lessons had full and active participation from all pupils. Teachers are skilful at using progressive practices to help pupils acquire and develop appropriate skills and so improve their

performance. Most give good feedback to pupils, but some pupils in all years did not have a clear idea of how they could improve in several of the activities. Key words were displayed for some activities but they were rarely referred to and opportunities to use and develop understanding through technical language were missed.

Leadership and management

141. The good management systems in place help the department to operate effectively. When new staff come into the college, good guidelines familiarise them with the day-to-day routines quickly, to ensure that they can focus their efforts on teaching and learning. These practices have led to improvements in GCSE during the past year. In Years 7 to 9, pupils have a little less than the recommended two hours' curriculum time each week and that is having an impact on their achievement.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

Health and social care

Provision in health and social care is very good.

	Year 10
Standards	Average
Achievement	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good
Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Progress since previous inspection	Not applicable

Main strengths

- Very good relationships encourage pupils' full participation and interest
- The structure of the course allows for steady and effective progress in knowledge and understanding
- Outside agencies are used very well to reinforce teaching and learning

Commentary

Examination results

142. The present cohort is the first to follow this course, so there are no examination results.

Standards and achievement

143. Pupils' attainment is at an average level for this early stage of the course. Following a lesson on alcohol abuse, pupils were able to discuss many of the problems and side effects freely and sensibly and showed a good level of understanding. Their written work shows that they are acquiring good knowledge and understanding of a variety of health issues and are making very good progress in research techniques using the Internet. Overall progress since the start of the course is very good.

Teaching and learning

144. Teachers use good techniques to help pupils to improve their work. The course criteria are constantly highlighted in a way which encourages all pupils to try to achieve the best they can and attain high grades. The work is very well matched to individual pupils' needs, ranging across a wide range of abilities. All the pupils are keen, interested and willing to learn, and discussion showed that very good learning is taking place.

Leadership and management

145. The course has been very well planned with succinct targets, so that pupils feel comfortable and secure in taking part in this new venture. Invited speakers add interest and relevance, and increase pupils' motivation to learn.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION (PSHE) AND CITIZENSHIP

Citizenship is taught as an integral part of the college's personal development programme in which all pupils receive one lesson each week. A local education authority PSHE programme is followed. Sampled PSHE lessons indicate that tutors know their pupils well and that the course is successful in promoting good personal development and a healthy life-style.

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is satisfactory.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Above average	Average
Achievement	Good	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Leadership	Good	
Management	Unsatisfactory	
Progress since previous inspection	Not applicable	

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The college has made good progress in the introduction of citizenship into the curriculum
- The scheme of work is comprehensive and covers the statutory content of the citizenship programme
- Many subjects make a significant cross-curricular contribution to citizenship
- Assessment of pupils' work and progress is not yet fully developed
- Statutory requirements for reporting citizenship to parents are not fully met

Commentary

Standards and achievement

146. Pupils enter the college with average knowledge and understanding of the concepts of citizenship. They make good progress, through a combination of lesson input and the whole-school ethos, and have gained a good insight and understanding of being a citizen by Year 9. Pupils in Year 11 have a good grasp of the meaning and responsibilities of being a citizen. In Years 10 and 11, progress is not as great, chiefly because less time is devoted to citizenship, as careers education and post-16 choices take curriculum time. History, mathematics and English make a contribution to the citizenship curriculum. Pupils all play a role in the democratic processes of the college, via their form contributions to the college council, and they contribute to local charities, with many helping in the local community.

Teaching and learning

147. The teaching of citizenship observed during the inspection was of very variable quality and ranged from excellent to just satisfactory. Overall, the teaching observed was satisfactory and was promoting satisfactory learning. Citizenship is taken seriously by the teaching staff who deliver it, and lessons are well planned. Good use was made of the resources available and evidence of staff adapting the materials and producing their own to teach modules more effectively showed a positive commitment. Pupils' written work was not marked rigorously and, as a consequence, pupils had only a limited idea of what progress they were making. In nearly all lessons observed, pupils were encouraged to debate. Their contributions to discussions were frequently mature and showed good understanding. One excellent lesson in Year 9, for example, encouraged pupils to consider global citizenship

questions. The use of imaginative resources and skilled teaching technique were outstanding in getting the pupils to participate and respect each other's views.

Leadership and management

148. The introduction of the citizenship programme has been well led. Staff have received relevant training and are committed to the importance of citizenship in the curriculum. However, management of citizenship is unsatisfactory because the statutory requirements for reporting to parents are not yet met. This is planned for the end of the 2005 school year. Also, insufficient emphasis is given to the assessment of pupils' work and progress.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

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

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2003.

Level 3 GCE AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England 2003	School	England 2003	School	England 2003
English	22	90.8	82.9	22.7	17.5	32.3	28.7
History	12	83.3	80.7	33.3	19.5	32.5	28.6
Art	7	85.7	80.1	57.1	23.7	36.7	29.9
Biology	5	100	65.2	0	11.1	30.0	20.6
Mathematics	12	83.3	61.9	50.0	17.1	37.5	22.1
Music	2	100	86.5	0	21.4	25.0	30.7
ICT	7	100	67.0	14.3	10.9	32.9	21.4
General Studies	29	75.9	73.9	24.1	17.8	27.9	25.7
Geography	6	100	74.3	50.0	19.8	40.0	26.5

Level 3 GCE A level and VCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
English	13	100	99.4	38.5	36.3	80.0	80.9
History	8	100	99.0	37.5	44.6	75.0	84.6
Business Studies	5	100	98.7	60.0	36.8	80.0	80.1
Art	4	100	98.6	25	50.2	75.0	87.5
Biology	2	50	96.4	0	39.2	20.0	78.6
Mathematics	7	100	96.7	28.6	55.6	82.9	88.8
ICT	5	100	95.6	20.0	24.6	72.0	69.5
Geography	6	100	98.7	33.3	44.5	80.0	84.0

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

English language and literature

Provision in English language and literature is very good.

	Years 12 and 13
Standards	Above average
Achievement	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good
Leadership	Excellent
Management	Excellent
Progress since previous inspection	Very good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Rising standards show very good achievement by students
- Teaching is very well informed and stimulating
- Students struggle to identify original ideas at times, so discussion does not sparkle as it might
- Outstanding leadership and management have led to the success of the subject

Commentary

Examination results

149. Results at A-level in 2003 were at the national average, and similar in 2004. Female students tend to do better than male, and get better results in English than in other subjects. AS results showed both sexes tending to make better progress in English than in other subjects.

Standards and achievement

150. All students are capable of writing accurately and at length. Essay introductions are clearly focused but conclusions are more varied in quality. They can be a mundane summary of what has already been written. Given students' standards when they joined the course, their achievement is very good. Higher attaining students rise to the challenge of demanding tasks. They write lengthy essays which show the ability to analyse and weigh points of view, whilst showing flair in expression. Textual references are precise and well chosen. Average attaining students can write lengthy yet meticulous pieces, though with a tendency to include too much detail and explanation. They show good knowledge and understanding of literature. Some generalisations are stated with too much certainty, however, and would benefit from more qualification or hesitancy. Nonetheless, terminology and techniques are used and analysed successfully. Lower attaining students write sensible, accessible English. Whilst their work shows good understanding, there is too much emphasis on description followed by explanation, rather than analysis. Quotation is under-used.

Teaching and learning

151. Teachers have very good knowledge of both subject and course requirements. Students learn how to develop personal response to a text into an analysis of its purpose, effectiveness and techniques. This is because they are made familiar with exactly what constitutes success, and what they need to do to show their ability in coursework and examinations. Lessons are very well planned, and taught in a lively and stimulating fashion. On occasion, teachers explain at too great a length, which can be rather daunting. Relationships are excellent and teachers and students share high expectations for what can be achieved. A very good range of methods is used successfully in each lesson. Class discussion does not often motivate and inspire, as few students are keen to question and develop ideas, or challenge the views of others. Nevertheless they are very attentive and

concerned to make progress. Students have learnt skills very well, such as note-taking, annotation and the importance of cross-reference.

Leadership and management

152. The high quality of leadership and management, as in the main school, results in a clear and agreed vision of how to continue to raise standards. Considerable work goes on to review the relative success of the course components and to amend what is taught and how, in the light of experience. Assessment systems are thorough and very well used, allowing students' progress to be followed in detail. Students are very complimentary about the quality of marking and advice they receive on their essays. The English course is very popular with students. Two-thirds of the sixth form choose to take it, and there is a relatively good gender balance. Retention rates have been high. Improvement since the previous inspection has been very good.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

153. Overall, the standard of students' language and literacy skills is average. In most subjects, good use is made of discussion to explore and extend students' understanding. Marking pays good attention to clarity of expression and the correct use of specialist terms.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is good.

	Years 12 and 13
Standards	Average
Achievement	Good
Teaching and learning	Good
Leadership	Very good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students are provided with very good support from knowledgeable and committed teachers, so they achieve well
- Some students' knowledge of algebra is insufficient to enable them to start the A-level course confidently
- Numbers taking A level are increasing

Commentary

Examination results

154. The small number of students taking A level in 2003 attained above average standards. The situation was similar in 2004. A comparison of final grades with the students' GCSE results indicates that they had made very good progress, with all the students achieving grade A, B or C.

Standards and achievement

155. The ability range of students being accepted onto the course is very wide, some with the highest grades and others with low grades, having taken the intermediate tier at GCSE. Entry standards into the sixth form are lower than average. Students with the lower grades have some difficulty with algebra and their progress is inhibited as a result. Students in Year 13, many of whom have a record of success in Year 12 with good AS level grades, do well and reach average standards overall. All students achieve well for their capabilities.

Teaching and learning

156. Teachers are knowledgeable about the subject. They effectively plan teaching to meet students' needs and provide very good support for learning. Sometimes opportunities are missed to explain

some of the advanced mathematical ideas behind more basic assumptions, such as the 'chain rule' in differentiation. Students have a good knowledge of their progress because of an effective system of grading and marking of their work.

Leadership and management

157. Very effective leadership and good management have been successful in increasing the number of students wishing to take A level and results have improved. Twenty-five students started A level in 2004 in Year 12, a considerable increase in numbers compared with earlier years. Progress since the last inspection has been good.

Mathematics across the curriculum

158. Students are competent in their application of number. Students in English used percentages to manipulate income and expenditures and, in science, there is a strong mathematical emphasis in physics, with students working on vectors and using algebra in developing the laws of motion. Overall, students' competence is at the expected level for their age, enabling them to achieve appropriate standards relevant to the subject being studied.

SCIENCE

Physics and biology A-level courses are taught in the sixth form. Physics has been introduced this year and is taught in Year 12. This was the focus for inspection. Biology, which was sampled, has been taught for a number of years. In the Year 12 biology lesson seen, the quality of teaching and learning was very good. The focus of the lesson, planning and working on a practical project where rates of osmosis were being measured, was explained with care. The teacher's expert knowledge was used very effectively to help students understand examination board requirements and to respond to their questions. Relationships amongst the students and with the teacher were of high quality. All the students knew what they were doing, although the depth of their understanding varied considerably, reflecting the wide range of prior attainment of the students taking the course.

Physics

Provision in physics is good.

	Year 12
Standards	Below average
Achievement	Good
Teaching and learning	Good
Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Not applicable

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers' good subject knowledge is a major factor in students learning effectively
- Very good relationships between teachers and students result in well-motivated and interested students
- A good focus on past paper questions is preparing the students well for AS examinations
- Explanations are not always sufficiently clear to the wide range of ability of students in the class

Commentary

Examination results

159. As physics has just been introduced into the sixth form, there are no AS or A-level examination results.

Standards and achievement

160. Students with a wide range of ability enter the sixth form, with GCSE grades ranging from C to A*. Their achievements are good because of effective teaching. They are well-motivated and hardworking students. Current standards, about half way through the AS Year 12 course, are below average overall, with students likely to attain the full range of grades. Students are beginning to use units accurately and to appreciate the problem-solving nature of advanced physics, with its strong emphasis on accuracy and numerical work. Problems, involving vectors, work and power, are completed successfully by high attaining students but others struggle to resolve difficulties.

Teaching and learning

161. Learning is effective because staff are confident physicists with good knowledge, who enjoy teaching their subject. Well-structured lessons help students to make progress in their learning. They start with learning intentions being shared with the class, follow on with activities such as problems and experimental tasks, and finish with a summarising session. Students are encouraged to work at a good pace. Key ideas, such as power and the equations of motion, are defined exactly so that students have accurate notes. Ideas are reinforced through the use of problems, which test understanding. Past papers are used to ensure tasks have the correct standard of difficulty. Work is less effective when explanations do not go into sufficient detail to enable all students to gain a clear step-by-step understanding, or when plenary sessions are not used effectively to assess their knowledge.

Leadership and management

162. Leadership and management are both good. The curriculum and assessment systems are also good. The team of physicists work closely together to ensure appropriate coverage of the scheme of work. Although much is shared informally, opportunities for teachers to observe each other teach have not yet been found. Incorporating ICT in learning is planned well, for example using light gates in velocity and acceleration experiments. Course planning incorporates good examples of everyday-life activities, such as calculations concerning 'bungee jumping'! Resources are organised and used well by the students but are insufficient for the coming year, when students move through into Year 13; the college is fully aware of this situation.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

This A-level course was sampled. In a joint Year 12 and Year 13 lesson, an innovative approach led to students learning very well. Standards were in line with course expectations. Year 12 students circulated around a series of mini-presentations provided by Year 13 students about avoiding the pitfalls of project work. This provided valuable pointers for Year 12, and Year 13 students improved their current project work as a result of preparing for and making the presentations.

ICT across the curriculum

163. Students have sound access to ICT resources in the sixth form and use their skills well in other subjects. They word-process, and use spreadsheets and specialist software to enhance their learning. Most, if not all, students have access to computers of their own and use the Internet to very good effect as a resource for their studies. The overall standard of ICT work in sixth form studies is average.

HUMANITIES

Geography, history and sociology are taught in the sixth form. History was a focus subject and geography and sociology were sampled. In the geography lesson observed, the selected activities involved students in taking responsibility for their learning. This led to good achievement and above average standards. Students had been asked to research and prepare a five-minute PowerPoint presentation on a particular aspect of forestry. They had selected relevant information of sufficient breadth and depth and used a variety of

methods to analyse and present data. They spoke confidently, handled questions, and showed maturity in evaluating each other's work. In the sociology lesson sampled, students learned well, developing a keen interest in the subject. Teacher's subject knowledge was good, which led to probing questions and good, interesting content. The lesson was well planned and students of a range of capabilities achieved well.

History

Provision in history is very good.

	Years 12 and 13
Standards	Above average
Achievement	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good
Leadership	Excellent
Management	Very good
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Recent results at A and AS level are above the national average and most students achieve very well
- Leadership and management provide firm direction, strong systems and a desire to improve
- Relationships between staff and students are relaxed, very positive and productive
- The imaginative curriculum chosen offers a flexible course which attracts a large number of students
- Students are not fully aware of the skills and processes they need to use in their learning

Commentary

Examination results

164. Results at A level in 2003 were above average, continuing the upward trend from 2002, and in 2004 they were similarly good. AS level results were also above average for the large set of students; about half the students exceeded their grade predictions. This has been the case for several years, and represents improvement since the time of the last report.

Standards and achievement

165. Present standards are above average in both Years 12 and 13. This demonstrates very good achievement, as attainment is below average overall at the start of courses. Students can take history with a minimum of 5 'C' grades at GCSE, not necessarily in history. Students are very positive about the opportunities they are offered and feel that they are doing well because of the department's support. They make very good progress in acquiring knowledge and a historical perspective on events.

Teaching and learning

166. The quality of teaching is very good, and a significant amount is excellent. The best features of teaching are its high pace, focus and challenge, with very good structure and sequence. Teachers' expert knowledge is well interwoven with emphasis on meeting examination criteria, so that students are very well supported in lessons. Their learning progresses very well as a result. For example in a Year 13 lesson, some students worked independently on individual studies while the rest criticised a model essay, then worked in pairs to identify 'hot spots' in the development of the war in Vietnam. Strengths were that students made their own decisions, shared them orally and agreed contributions to a class account, which the teacher was then to collate for the next lesson. The teacher's levels of planning, organisation and resourcing were exceptional and resulted in very high achievement. Students are not fully aware of the importance of the processes used to learn and this is a relative weakness at times.

Leadership and management

167. The department has the same rigour and drive noted in the main school. Leadership has a self-critical focus on improvement, and the curriculum chosen for A level is innovative. It allows students to choose their preferred modes of study and assessment, which promotes both responsibility and high standards. Communication and relationships are very strong, resulting in shared aims, good practice and supportive staff development. All management systems work very effectively, and the department has a sound agenda for review and further improvements. No judgement was made separately on the sixth form at the last inspection but better results indicate good improvement since that time.

ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING

No subjects were inspected in this area.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

Lessons in art and design and theatre studies were sampled. Timetable difficulties prevented a music lesson being seen. Two lessons of A-level art and design were observed. Students of a wide range of prior attainment are accepted onto the A-level art and design course, some without GCSE passes in the A*-C range; all achieve well. The quality of teaching seen was good, with effective support provided for students in their individual, but directed, studies. Teachers have extensive subject expertise and use it well to assist students in improving both their skills and knowledge. Students are well motivated, concentrate well and have high aspirations of success.

One period of theatre studies was observed, where students planned their interpretation of the Fairy Song from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Students achieved well and were confident to experiment with the knowledge and skills they had acquired in previous lessons. This was because of the teacher's very good planning and subject knowledge and the way activities were broken down into manageable yet challenging tasks. The students worked very well as a group and, by the end of the lesson, had produced a polished performance

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

One lesson was observed of a course leading to the community sports leaders award. The quality of teaching was very good. Teachers used their expert knowledge and understanding to very good effect and students were encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning and performance. Students developed an increased awareness and understanding of community sports issues and achieved very well for their capabilities.

BUSINESS

No subjects were inspected in this area.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

No subjects were inspected in this area.

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND GENERAL PROGRAMMES

One period of general studies was observed, where discussion centred on exploring both the students' and others' cultures. The teaching was good because of the good knowledge of current affairs, very good relationships and clear questioning. Students achieved well as they gave thoughtful answers and shared their knowledge gained from other subjects, such as sociology and religious education. The teacher encouraged discussion on news items where communities have felt that their cultural heritage was threatened and gave a clear moral lead on racism and stereotyping. The lesson made a significant contribution to students' moral, social and cultural development.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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