

INSPECTION REPORT

LANDAU FORTE COLLEGE

Derby, Derbyshire

LEA area: DERBY

Unique reference number: 113029

Headteacher: Mr Stephen Whiteley

Reporting inspector: Mr George Knights
3268

Dates of inspection: 17th – 21st September 2001

Inspection number: 188490

Full inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: City Technology College

School category: Independent

Age range of pupils: 11 - 18

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Fox Street
Derby
Derbyshire

Postcode: DE1 2LF

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Appropriate authority: The proprietor

Name of chair of governors: The Baroness Brigstocke

Date of previous inspection: June 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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3268	George Knights	Registered inspector		What sort of school is it? (Characteristics) How high are standards?
10173	Catherine Hinds	Lay inspector		Attitudes, values & personal development/attendance How well does the school care for its pupils and students? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
2893	John Manning	Team inspector	English	
11548	David Lee	Team inspector	Mathematics Equal opportunities	
10561	Angela Fraser	Team inspector	Science	
11641	Debbie Sheffield	Team inspector	Design & technology	
22458	Gilbert McGinn	Team inspector	History	How good are curricular and other opportunities?
11969	John Hardy	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	
20649	John Flinn	Team inspector	Geography Religious Education	
29806	Jose Marshall	Team inspector	Modern Foreign Languages	
8204	John Sheffield	Team inspector	Art	
2866	Robert Battey	Team inspector	Special educational needs Physical education	
18670	Peter Tidmarsh	Team inspector	Music	
10010	George Wallace	Team inspector	Business Studies	
21906	John Scottow	Team inspector	Chemistry Physics	
11838	Derek Cronin	Team inspector	Modern Foreign Languages (support)	

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REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	6
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
ANNEX: THE SIXTH FORM	
PART B: COMMENTARY	
HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?	13
The school's results and pupils' achievements	
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development	
HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?	18
HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS OR STUDENTS?	21
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?	25
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS	28
HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?	29
WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?	32
PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS	33
PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4	38
PART E: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM	63

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Landau Forte College is a mixed comprehensive school for pupils aged 11 to 18 years of age. It is located in the centre of the City of Derby. Students are admitted from across the city, with half coming from the seven inner city wards. Designated as a City Technology College, it is heavily over-subscribed. After application of the inner/outer city criterion, places are allocated within each band of ability on the basis of technological aptitude. Overall, attainment on entry is close to the national profile. There are 1015 students on roll, making the college slightly larger than average. Students come from a broad range of socio-economic backgrounds. Unemployment in the area is below the national average and the number of students eligible for free school meals is also below average. The number of students with English as an additional language is above the national average. The number on the college's register of special educational needs is below the national average, whilst the number with statements of special educational need is well below the national average. The vast majority of students transfer, at the end of Year 11, to sixth form education, most remaining at the college.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Landau Forte College is a very good school with many outstanding features. Standards throughout are well above national averages. Teaching is consistently good and this, alongside very positive attitudes and excellent relationships, enables students to achieve very well. The leadership of the college is excellent and management is very good. The college is thus very effective and gives good value for money.

What the school does well

- Visionary leadership and strong management together generate a shared commitment to continuous improvement within the college.
- Students are helped to improve their achievements year on year.
- The college provides a rich and imaginative range of learning opportunities with an effective and appropriate emphasis on science and technology.
- Consistently good teaching encourages students to become actively involved in their learning.
- Each student is very well known as an individual, ensuring that they are able to make the best use of all that the college offers.
- Excellent relationships and strong motivation enable students to adopt very positive attitudes to all aspects of college life.
- The contribution and aspiration of each member of the college community is valued.

What could be improved

- The way in which assessment information is used to support students' learning.
- The way in which teachers help the most able students to achieve their full potential.

The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The college was last inspected in June 1996. Since that time it has made very good progress. At the time of the previous inspection the college was only four years old. Since then it has successfully completed its establishment and consolidation. Results at Key Stages 3 and 4 have risen steadily, as have those in the sixth form. The very positive atmosphere in the college, reported previously, has been maintained and strengthened. Very good progress has been made in dealing with the key issues identified in the previous inspection report. Monitoring and evaluation of all aspects of the college's work are now well established and considerable attention has been given to students' target setting and measurement of progress. Good progress has been made in ensuring that lessons meet the needs of all students, though there remains some work to do to provide well for the most able students in some subjects. Good progress has also been made in improving the quality of marking and feedback to students on how well they are doing. The link between strategic planning for improvement and budget management is now excellent as is the partnership between governors and senior staff in the college. Very good work has been done to improve communication with parents.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 14 and 16 year olds and by sixth form students at the end of Year 13, based on average point scores in national tests, GCSE and A-level/AS-level examinations.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1998	1999	2000	2000
Key Stage 3 tests	A	A	A	A
GCSE examinations	A	A*	A	A*
A-levels/AS-levels	A	B	B	

Key	
high	A*
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E

Standards have risen steadily at both Key Stages 3 and 4 in recent years at a similar rate to that nationally. In 2000 national tests, results in English, mathematics and science were all well above the national average, with mathematics results slightly better than those in English and science. GCSE results in 2000 were lower than in the previous year, as expected, but in 2001 showed a marked improvement on those in 2000. Results in the sixth form have risen steadily and this trend of improvement has been maintained in 2001, when the college has achieved its best A/AS level results so far. The college sets itself challenging targets. It narrowly missed its targets for GCSE results in 2000, but set higher targets in 2001 which it managed to exceed. Throughout the college students are producing work above the national average and are achieving very well.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	All students adopt very good attitudes to their lessons and to what the college stands for.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	The behaviour of students is very good, both in lessons and as they move around the college
Personal development and relationships	These are exceptionally good. The excellent relationships between staff and students are a major factor in the success of the college.
Attendance	Attendance is well above the national average and continues to improve.

Throughout the college, relationships are based upon mutual respect. The college operates as a 'single status' community and staff hold students in high regard. In turn, students adopt very positive stances to their work and to the way they conduct themselves around the college. This helps to create an exceptional community in which all are mature, responsible and mindful of the needs of others.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Years 7 – 9	Years 10 – 11	Years 12 – 13
Quality of teaching	Good	Good	Good

Inspectors make judgements about teaching in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. 'Satisfactory' means that the teaching is adequate and strengths outweigh weaknesses.

Teaching is consistently good throughout the college and this enables students to approach all their lessons confidently. As a result, they learn successfully and achieve very well. Teaching in science is very good and is a major strength of the college. Teaching in English and mathematics is good overall, though with some very good features. The main reason why teaching is so consistently good is that teachers are confident in what they teach and thus make their lessons stimulating and challenging. Students respond with enthusiasm and are keen to do their best. Teachers generally strive to match work to the needs of each individual and are generally very successful, but more

needs to be done to challenge the highest ability students in some subjects. The college makes very good provision in its teaching for students with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language. Very good work is undertaken across all subjects to develop students' literacy skills. This is particularly successful in developing speaking and listening skills, which enhance learning in many subjects. The application of mathematics across the curriculum is an area currently being developed across the college, though considerable successful work already takes place.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The college provides a wide range of courses for students to study in both Key Stages 3 and 4. The curriculum has been imaginatively developed to provide a wide range of pathways to success for all students in the college.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	This is very good. Teachers are well aware of the needs of each individual and modify tasks accordingly. Where additional classroom support is provided, it is very effectively used.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	All these students are well known to staff, and the necessary steps are taken to ensure that they play a full part in lessons and thus learn successfully
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	This is very good overall. The contribution the college makes to students' moral, social and cultural development is very good and the contribution to spiritual development is good.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The college cares very well for all its students. Each student is well known as an individual and steps are taken to ensure that their needs are met fully.

The taught curriculum is augmented by a wide range of enrichment activities, which broaden the range of experiences offered to students. Many of these provide opportunities for students to perform to a high standard, for instance in sporting activity or in music, dance and drama. Students' progress is monitored carefully by personal tutors, who are able to spend a considerable proportion of the college week working with their tutor groups. Assessment information, which is now copious and well managed, is progressively being used successfully to guide students' education, but further work is required to make sure that this has a strong impact on student performance. The college has established very good communications with parents. All parents are well informed, both about general college matters and about the progress being made by their children.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Leadership of the college is excellent and overall management is very good. The principal is supported very well by all staff, and careful delegation and clear accountability are key features in the successful running of the college.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors fulfil their responsibilities in the college very successfully. They are actively involved in helping shape the strategic direction of the college. They fulfil their role as critical friends well and hold staff to account.
The school's evaluation of its performance	This is very good, both in whole college development and in the evaluation of what takes place on a day-to-day basis.
The strategic use of resources	The college makes very effective use of the strategic resources available to it.

The outstanding, inspirational leadership of the principal is the most significant reason why the college fully lives out its aims. Staff in the college are well qualified and there are no vacancies. The college is very well resourced, especially with information and communication technology. The college building is very impressive. It is adequate for almost all college needs and provides a stimulating environment for staff and students to work in. The college applies the principles of best value very effectively and makes very good use of the resources available.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students like attending the college. • High expectations of what students can achieve are a key factor in helping students to achieve good progress. • The college is very approachable when parents have queries or problems. • The college helps students to become mature and responsible. • The college is very well led and managed. • The college provides a wide range of activities outside lessons. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some parents were concerned about the amount of work students are required to do at home. • Concern was expressed by a small number of parents about how well they were informed about their children's progress. • Some felt that the college did not work closely with them.

Before the inspection, 59 parents attended a meeting with the Registered Inspector. Questionnaires were returned by 139 parents and 22 of these had comments appended.

Inspectors agree with all those aspects which please parents most. Very impressive leadership and management are key to the college's success. Students are very enthusiastic about their life in the college and are stimulated by the high expectations of them. Students are, indeed, very mature and responsible. The range of activities beyond lessons is impressive, significantly broadening the opportunities for students to extend their interests. Inspectors do not agree with parents that the college does not work closely with them. Considerable attention is paid to maintaining good lines of communication with parents and to responding positively to them. Given the extended college day and the setting of extension study, inspectors consider that the amount of work students are expected to do beyond lessons, whether at home or otherwise, is quite adequate. Inspectors consider that the college's arrangements for informing parents about students' progress are very good. The overview which personal tutors provide enables parents to be well informed about the strengths and weaknesses of each individual.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

There are 229 students in the sixth form, around four-fifths of these having been students in the college in Year 11. There are similar numbers of male and female students in the sixth form. The ethnic mix of students in the sixth form reflects that in the rest of the college. The overall standard of students on entry to the sixth form is slightly above the national average for sixth forms. Their backgrounds broadly reflect those of students in the main part of the college. The number of students in the sixth form has risen in recent years and the range of courses has expanded accordingly. The college offers a wide range of courses to advanced and AS level, together with a small number of advanced vocational qualifications. At the end of sixth form study, over nine-tenths of students transfer to higher education.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

The sixth form provision in the college is very good. Standards are steadily improving and are above the national average for sixth forms. This is a direct result of consistently good teaching, which enables students to learn successfully. Results are particularly impressive in science subjects and in general studies and are relatively low in French and in art and design. Students are, through the courses offered, able to build successfully on their previous studies and their needs are thus well catered for. The vast majority of students who begin sixth form studies go on to complete courses successfully and attendance in the sixth form is very good. The leadership and co-ordination of the sixth form is very good and the sixth form is very cost-effective, requiring no funds intended for other students in order to sustain the range of courses offered.

Strengths

- Standards are steadily improving as consistently good teaching becomes more focused on the needs of each student.
- Teaching is consistently good, enabling all students to achieve very well.
- Excellent relationships help create an atmosphere in which students study with confidence and enthusiasm.
- The sixth form curriculum enables students to build successfully on their previous learning.
- Students receive very good support and guidance, so that they have a clear grasp of their targets and goals.
- Very good leadership and management ensure that sixth form students are well integrated into college life.

What could be improved

- Ensuring that the most able students are challenged to achieve the highest standards of which they are capable.
- Using assessment information to give all students clear guidance on what they need to do to improve their work further.
- The provision, for all sixth form students, of a religious education course which meets statutory requirements.

The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan. Strengths and areas for improvement in individual subjects are identified in the sections on individual subjects in the full report.

THE QUALITY OF PROVISION IN INDIVIDUAL CURRICULUM AREAS

The table below shows overall judgements about the provision in the subjects and courses that were inspected in the sixth form. Judgements 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	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Mathematics	The quality of provision is very good. Very good teaching by enthusiastic teachers results in very effective learning by students.
Chemistry	The quality of provision is very good. Teachers communicate chemistry very well to their students, helping them to achieve good standards.
Biology	The quality of provision is very good. Very good student achievements result from very effective teaching and learning in all biology lessons.
Physics	The quality of provision is very good. Above average achievement in physics is a direct consequence of very good teaching of the subject.
Design and Technology	The quality of provision is good. Very good standards are achieved because teachers present their subject with enthusiasm and skill.
Business Studies	The quality of provision is very good. High standards are achieved because teachers work very closely as a team to enable students to achieve well.
Computing	The quality of provision is very good. Improved results in ICT are a direct result of teachers' enthusiasm and good teaching.
Art and Design	The quality of provision is very good. Very good teaching focuses on the needs of individuals, helping them to achieve well.
Geography	The quality of provision is good. This is because well-taught learning activities involve all students in all parts of their learning.
History	The quality of provision is very good. A marked improvement in results is a result of well-focused teaching and effective subject leadership.
English	The quality of provision is good. Standards are above average. The new English teaching team are settling well and engaging students effectively.
Modern Languages – French	The quality of provision is good. Good teaching focuses well on the needs of all students.
Modern Languages - German	The quality of provision is good. Students new to the course are being helped to settle well as a result of sensitive teaching.

In addition to the above subjects, work was sampled in other courses provided by the college. Throughout, teaching was consistently good, enabling students to learn effectively and to make good progress.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Sixth form students are very well cared for. Good procedures are in place to assess their needs and to provide guidance on future study. The daily contact with personal tutors is a major strength, providing continuity in care.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	Leadership and management in the sixth form are very good. There is clear direction which fully embraces the aims and values of the college. Recent adjustments to responsibilities have had little impact on the very effective organisation and administration. Monitoring and analysis of students' performance is very good. The governing body plays a very effective part in the leadership of the sixth form. Great care is taken to ensure that the needs of each individual student are met.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

What students like about the sixth form	What they feel could be improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The environment is welcoming. • The college has a very good reputation for academic achievement. • Supportive and committed staff who are accessible give freely of their time to offer help to students. • Students are treated as responsible young adults. • The induction programme helps integrate new students so that they settle well. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The quality and helpfulness of advice provided for them. • The information they receive about the progress they are making. • The guidance they are given about future options.

Students are very positive about the college. Inspectors agree with them about the things they like in the sixth form. They do not agree with the concerns expressed by students. The college offers good help, support and guidance to sixth form students and provides good information to them, both on how well they are doing in their studies and about future options.

COMPARING PROVISION IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

Inspectors make judgements about provision in subjects and courses, and about leadership and management, 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".

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

- 1 When students enter the college at the age of 11 years, their attainment is broadly in line with the national average. This is because the entry policy for the college ensures places are allocated to students across the ability range. Students make very good progress during their first three years in the college, and their attainment by the time they are 14 years old is well above average. This progress is maintained so that by the time they are aged 16 years students are gaining GCSE results that are well above the national average. Standards have improved since the previous inspection and this is a direct consequence of overall improvement in the quality of teaching in the college. It also reflects the shared commitment of all to strive for high standards, both in tests and examinations but also in more general aspects of college life.
- 2 In 2000, results in national tests at the end of Key Stage 3 were well above the national average. Results were also well above the national average for similar schools¹. Results have been improving steadily for several years, at roughly the same rate as improvement in results nationally. The results in 2001 tests maintained this steady rate of improvement. Students with special educational needs make very good progress during their first three years in the college and the number of students who fail to reach the national average of Level 5 in national tests is well below the national average. Students for whom English is an additional language are well integrated into lessons. Careful and sensitive support for them ensures that they can play a full part in lessons and they, too, make very good progress and achieve very well in tests.
- 3 There is little variation in the attainment of boys and girls in these national tests. Similarly, there is very little overall variation in the attainment of students in English, mathematics and science tests, though performance in mathematics is slightly better than in English and science. This is mainly due to the fact that boys are further ahead of the national average than girls in mathematics, whereas girls are further ahead of the national average than boys in English and science. The proportions of students reaching Level 6 or above² are well above the national average in all three subjects.
- 4 English results in national tests in the recent past have been well above the national average and results in 2001 maintained this level of performance. Standards in English during Key Stage 3 are very good. They are particularly good in speaking and listening, where students' skills are well developed. This reflects a commitment across the college to develop students' oracy skills through the implementation of a detailed strategy. In many subjects, students are encouraged to present their thoughts and ideas orally and they are encouraged to listen with care and respond with sensitivity. This is complemented with good teaching in English and drama lessons, where there is a strong focus on language development. Reading standards are good, but writing standards are more variable, though generally above average.

¹ Similar school comparisons are made with schools having the same proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals.

² Level 6 is one level above the national average for pupils at the end of Year 9.

- 5 Results in national tests in mathematics were well above the national average in 2000 and showed further improvement in 2001. The 2000 results were very high when compared with similar schools nationally. Similarly, results in science in 2000 were well above average and these standards were improved in 2001. Students currently in the college are achieving very well in both mathematics and science and this is mainly due to well-structured work, dedicated and enthusiastic teaching and careful attention to the needs of all students.
- 6 Attainment in all other subjects during the first three years students are in the college is above average, and well above average in some. By the end of the key stage, students are achieving well above levels that would be expected nationally in geography, modern foreign languages and music. Attainment is broadly average in physical education and above average in other subjects. Students are helped to achieve very well overall because the college is committed to maintaining and developing a climate where the efforts of all are valued, where there is a desire amongst students to do their best and where teachers are dedicated to providing stimulating and challenging lessons.
- 7 Students successfully build on the good attainment in the first three years at the college, and in Years 10 and 11 continue to make very good progress. This enables students to do very well in GCSE examinations. Results in 2000 were well above the national average for the number of students gaining five or more A* to C grades and five or more A* to G grades. These results were, however, lower than in the previous year, as predicted by the college on the basis of students' prior attainment. Results were well above the average for similar schools. The college enters students for a higher than average number of examination subjects and the overall average points score per student in 2000 was very high when compared with the national average.
- 8 Results in 2001 were much better than in the previous year, maintaining a general upward trend in GCSE results over the lifetime of the college. Students for whom English is an additional language did very well in GCSE examinations, as did those with special educational needs. In both cases, this is because teachers pay careful attention to the needs of each individual in lessons. The college narrowly missed its target for the number of students gaining five or more A* to C grades in 2000, but set a higher target in 2001, which it exceeded. Setting higher targets is a good illustration of the high level of aspiration throughout the college.
- 9 Results in English, mathematics and science continue to be well above average in terms of GCSE grades, building on the very good work earlier in the college. In other subjects, results in GCSE examinations are generally well above the national average, representing very good progress of students since their arrival in the college. The work of students currently working in Key Stage 4 in the college suggests that the very good standards will be maintained. Students respond very positively to their studies and are being encouraged to take more responsibility for their learning. Teachers encourage students to work with increasing independence and there is strong evidence of students having real enthusiasm for their learning.
- 10 Standards in numeracy and literacy across the college are very good, thus helping students to undertake a range of activities involving either language or mathematical skills with confidence. Work to improve students' literacy skills in all subjects has become well established, though in subjects such as modern languages, physical education and English, students could be challenged to extend their ideas in writing and to improve the presentation of their work. Work is under way to encourage a more systematic approach to the development of students' numerical, graphical and spatial skills across the curriculum. This is being successful. Students use

calculators carefully, accurately and appropriately in most subjects. The college is well equipped with computers and related technology, and the use of information and communication technology to support learning is very well developed in most subjects.

Sixth form

- 11 Students enter the sixth form with attainment that is, generally, just above the national average for sixth form students. This is a direct result of the college's policy for admission to sixth form courses, which is strictly enforced for students joining the college from other schools and carefully implemented for students who completed courses in Year 11 at the college. The progress of all students during their sixth form study is very good and results in GCE A-level examinations in 2000 were above the national average, as they had been in the previous year. Results in 2001 were considerably better than those in 2000. The number of students gaining A to C grades was also higher in 2001 than previously, representing good progress in raising the attainment of the most able students in the sixth form. There is little difference between the attainment of boys and girls in the sixth form. Students with English as an additional language find little difficulty generally with the language demands of their advanced level study and thus make similar progress to other students. In 2000 examinations, results were relatively better in biology, chemistry, information and communication technology and general studies at advanced level, and in biology at AS-level, and less good in art, English and French. Results for 2001 indicate particularly good standards in physics, chemistry, biology, mathematics, history and business studies, with relatively lower performance in English, design and technology, German and Spanish.
- 12 Sixth form students currently studying in the college are working at above the national average for their courses and are achieving very well. This is a direct consequence of stimulating and well-focused teaching, together with very enthusiastic students who adopt positive attitudes to their learning. Particularly good work was observed during the inspection in physics, chemistry, biology and mathematics. Here, students were gaining in confidence because teaching was well planned and tasks were challenging for students of all levels of ability. Students were developing the ability to apply previously learned skills in new situations. In most subjects, students were skilled at applying and extending their knowledge and understanding from their GCSE courses.
- 13 Students have a very good grounding in the basic skills of numeracy and literacy. Their ability to discuss, explain and describe what they are doing orally is a major factor in helping them to gain a good understanding of the underlying ideas in the subjects they are studying. Students also write clearly and accurately, and note-taking skills have been well developed. Understanding of number and the ability to interpret graphs also enhances learning in a range of subjects. Throughout the college, access to computers means that students are confident users of a range of software to enhance their learning and the presentation of their work.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

- 14 Students at the college now have very positive attitudes, an improvement on the good attitudes evident during the previous inspection. Everyone is extremely enthusiastic about their life at the college. Many students arrive soon after 7.45 am, when the college opens, and begin to organise themselves for their day ahead, so keen are they to get started on work. Students relish the exceptionally good range of additional activities available to them. Well over 50 students, for example, were

excited by their involvement in their drama activities during the junior youth theatre practice session. Instant freeze poses alternated with great hilarity and entertainment.

- 15 The attitudes of students, including those with special educational needs, to their learning are very good and make significant contribution to the progress that they make. There are even some occasions when students begin their lessons themselves before teaching staff arrive. Year 8 musicians, for instance, began their warm up with classmates leading their peers in clapping out rhythms well before the teacher arrived. Students really enjoy most of their lessons. This was well illustrated by the youngest students who have just started learning German and thoroughly enjoyed practising new pronunciation. Students were on the edge of their chairs to see what was coming next and to have a go themselves. This very good involvement continues throughout most lessons. Year 11 scientists worked so enthusiastically learning about radio-active decay that they were reluctant to go to breakfast.
- 16 The behaviour of the students in the college is very good. Students behave very well in lessons where they are almost always attentive, calm and invariably prepared to abide by the expectations of the teacher. Remarkable composure is evident as students move around the college. Even when large numbers are moving between rooms, their movement is purposeful, efficient and orderly. All staff and students make very regular use of the restaurant, which is a focal point for the college. Here the atmosphere is extremely agreeable and the students' behaviour is exemplary.
- 17 A very few students have difficulty conforming to the college's high expectations of their behaviour. The minor disturbances which occur are not allowed to disrupt the learning of others, are very sensitively handled and are recognised as unacceptable by the misbehaving students. The number of students excluded from the college is well below average. There was no evidence of bullying, racism or sexism observed during the inspection. Reports from students and parents indicate that the occasions when bullying occurs are rare and students are confident that these will be well handled by staff.
- 18 The excellence of relationships is a major strength of the college. Relationships were already good at the time of the previous inspection and have improved very significantly since then. Students enjoy being with one another, whether in the classrooms or around the college. They offer each other exceptionally high levels of support, automatically and modestly helping each other. Proffering a helping hand comes naturally to these students. Students in a Year 8 English lesson, for instance, suggested lines to their colleague actors who were very cleverly portraying Victorian child labour situations.
- 19 Another very significant feature of the excellent relationships which prevail is the natural ease with which all students are included in college life. Those students who have special educational needs are totally involved with their friends in the work and leisure activities going on. No-one is left out of the impromptu cricket games in the playground or the socialising in the mall. Landau Forte is an exceptionally harmonious community.
- 20 Students relate equally well with adults. They show high levels of mutual interest, trust and support and these are characteristics of college life which are recognised and applauded by parents. Landau Forte is an outstanding example of an extremely civilised community where all make time for each other. Students are clearly aware of difference in individual or community beliefs and cultures and are keen to explore

the resulting issues in great depth. Year 7 students from a range of ethnic backgrounds were, for instance, sensitively and confidently sharing ideas about Islam in relation to food, laws and dress. They were very keen to pronounce the key terms of Sikhism correctly. Students show high levels of interest in, and compassion for, the lives and needs of others.

- 21 The college fully lives out its aim of focusing on everyone's individual development. Students make excellent gains in their personal development, this representing another improvement since the previous inspection. All of them, including those students who have additional challenges due to their special educational needs, take high levels of responsibility for their busy lives in the college. They pack a great deal into their week and most manage to have the correct equipment to hand. They use their personal organisers well and are careful about their lockers. The college remains in very good condition and this is a reflection of students' pride in their environment. Students are confident about themselves and are comfortable with others. Even Year 7 students soon get used to speaking out in front of much older students as they participate fully in the tutor group sessions. Students show very good initiative in many aspects of college life, organising collections of 'goodies' in shoe-boxes for sick or under-privileged children.
- 22 Attendance at the college is very good because students want to come and staff are careful about monitoring absence. Students arrive in college and lessons in time for activities to start promptly.

Sixth form

- 23 Students' attitudes in the sixth form are very good. Students are very enthusiastic about the college and positively seek out opportunities to share this enthusiasm with visitors. They all approach their lessons eagerly and are committed and energetic in pursuit of their studies. They willingly involve themselves in the many activities that are on offer, relishing the activities and opportunities provided beyond the bounds of the college. Students involved in Young Enterprise talk engagingly about their business understanding, whilst participants in the youth theatre are understandably fulsome in their praise for what they have been able to experience. Their behaviour is very good, ensuring that they provide very effective role models for younger students.
- 24 The quality of relationships in the sixth form is excellent, both among students and with adults. Students work brilliantly together. They are extremely sensible and mature young people and are highly civil as they respond to one another and to staff. This very high level of mutual support impacts significantly on the progress they are making. They take very good levels of initiative, as instanced by their commitment to, and organisation of, the sixth form dinner and dance at the end of the year. Students who attended Landau Forte from the age of 11 have already made excellent gains in their personal development and they continue to make very good gains in Years 12 and 13. Some Year 12 students new to the college are initially stunned by the excellent culture of the college. However, they very quickly recognise, absorb and commit to the way things are and happen at the college and thus make equally good gains in their personal development.
- 25 The attendance of sixth form students is very good and students are careful about arriving in college and lessons before activities are due to begin.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

- 26 Teaching in the college has improved since the time of the previous inspection. It is now consistently good, with many very good or excellent features. Improvements in teaching have come about through a systematic strategy, within the college, to monitor the quality of lessons and this has led to teachers becoming more aware of what is needed to help students achieve well. A major cause of the improvement has been the way teachers have dealt with key issues in the previous inspection report. That report indicated that teachers should match work more carefully to the needs of individuals and provide more detailed feedback to students through the marking of their work. In both of these aspects considerable progress has been made, though more remains to be done.
- 27 The quality of teaching observed during the inspection was good overall. In over four-fifths of lessons teaching was at least good and it was very good or excellent in around two-fifths of lessons. There is little significant difference in teaching quality between the two key stages, though more very good or excellent teaching was observed in Key Stage 3 than in Key Stage 4. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed during the inspection.
- 28 The teaching of English is good. Almost all members of the department are new to the college. They are thus still establishing relationships with students and getting to grips with the ways of the college. They are, however, devising successful strategies to maintain good order and purposeful working in classes, though some students have not yet responded positively to these efforts. In most lessons, teachers use a varied range of teaching methods, which hold the attention of students and encourage them to make concerted efforts. The marking of students' work is a very positive feature of the department's work, giving clear guidance to students on what they need to do to improve. Students respond very positively to this.
- 29 Teaching in mathematics is consistently good, with very good teaching in around a third of lessons. Teachers use their very good subject knowledge very successfully to present lessons that are interesting, stimulating and challenging. Hence, most students are excited about their mathematics and strive to improve their work. Skilful questioning prompts students to talk about their work, presenting their ideas with clarity. This focus on oral work helps students consolidate their understanding of the ideas underlying their mathematics. Teachers generally match tasks well to the needs of individuals, but occasionally students are not stimulated to do as much as they are capable of doing. This is reflected in target setting for individuals, which is often insufficiently challenging to ensure that all students achieve their best. The best lessons in mathematics are those where teachers make the objectives for the lesson clear to the students and then work with them to review progress. Thus, students are becoming more aware of their learning and of what they need to do to improve further.
- 30 The teaching of science is a strength of the college. In this subject, the large team of teachers has really come to terms with ensuring that work is very challenging for students of all levels of ability. This has encouraged students to become very reflective in their work and enabled them to grasp abstract ideas well. Students are able to apply their learning successfully because teachers set up stimulating investigative and experimental activities. Teachers of science are very aware of the need to help students develop their spoken and written language and provide many opportunities for students to do so successfully, at the same time enriching their learning of science. Very good use is made of students' number and graphical skills, in turn providing very effective contexts for these skills, learnt in mathematics, to be

consolidated. The use of information and communication technology is also very effective in science.

- 31 Elsewhere in the curriculum, teaching is good in all subjects except music, where it is excellent. In music, teaching is exhilarating, energetic and enthusiastic. Hence students of all ability levels derive great enjoyment from their study, are inspired to be creative and achieve the best of which they are capable. In all subjects, teachers have very good understanding of their subject, which enables them to present ideas and skills in imaginative and stimulating ways. Students respond very positively to this teaching and are, in turn, excited about what they are learning. Teachers encourage students to do well and almost all lessons are characterised by students being very supportive of one another. Students feel very positive about working hard and doing well, instead of feeling that it is not 'cool'.
- 32 A key characteristic of the consistently good teaching is the clear planning and tight structure to most lessons. This gives students confidence and helps them to know what is expected of them. In the best lessons, teachers make clear to students the purpose of the activities and then review, with them, their progress both during and at the end of lessons. Teachers generally have high expectations of students and have worked hard since the previous inspection to develop ways of making sure that all students are working at the right level of challenge. In most cases they have been very successful, but in several subjects there is scope for further work to be done to make sure that the highest ability students are fully extended.
- 33 Excellent relationships between teachers and students, based on mutual respect and a shared commitment to study, ensure that lessons run very smoothly. Occasionally, students find settling to work difficult, but invariably teachers respond sensitively but firmly to this. As a result, students are helped to re-focus on the tasks in hand and thus make good progress in lessons. Teachers manage time in lessons well. Breaks in some lessons for refreshments or lunch³ are generally managed very well and teachers ensure that students do not sense disruption in their learning
- 34 The marking of students' work is better than the marking seen in the previous inspection. Students are now provided with much more information to guide their future work. The use of day-to-day assessment to guide future lessons is generally good, with some very good practice in science, modern languages and music. This aspect of work needs further improvement, particularly in design and technology. The good use of short-term assessment is a key factor in ensuring that the work students undertake is well matched to their needs.
- 35 The college does not set homework in the conventional sense⁴, but provides extension study. Tasks set to students are well matched to their needs and build on the work that is being undertaken in class. These extension tasks are successful in helping students to develop good habits of independent study. Students make good use of the information centre in the college and of the wide range of information and communication resources available to them.

³ The college operates a 'rolling day'. This means that the college does not break as a whole at any time. Instead, teachers and students take a mid-morning break and a lunch break on a rota basis.

⁴ A college policy is for teachers not to set tasks to the whole of a class 'for the sake of it'. Instead, students are presented with extension tasks to undertake, appropriate to their needs, in between lessons. The policy also takes account of the fact that all students in this college work a 33-hour taught week, compared with the normal 25-hour week found in most secondary schools.

Deleted:

Deleted: 25 hour

- 36 The college has a significant number of students for whom English is not their first language. None of these students is, however, at the early stage of language acquisition. Nevertheless, staff are aware of the needs of these students and ensure that spoken and written language is understood by them. In turn, these students feel safe, secure and valued in the college and they are making very good progress. Similarly, the individual needs of students with special educational needs are well known by those teachers who work with them. Tasks are well matched to their needs and, where it is provided, additional classroom support is used sensitively and effectively. Hence these students, too, are able to work with confidence, to make good progress and to achieve very well.

Sixth form

- 37 Teaching in the sixth form is good overall, with many very good features. Teaching is good or better in almost nine-tenths of lessons and is very good or excellent in around a third of lessons. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed. There is no significant difference in teaching quality between Years 12 and 13 and sixth form teaching quality is very similar to that in the main part of the college. Teaching in the sixth form is better than it was at the time of the previous inspection. This is because the staff responded very positively to the key issues identified in that report and now ensure a good match between work set and the individual needs of students.
- 38 A key feature of the success of sixth form students in the college is that teaching is never less than good overall. This means that students approach their lessons with confidence. Good teacher subject knowledge in all subjects means that work is presented in stimulating and exciting ways, which encourage students to enjoy their learning. Teaching in the sixth form is very good in biology, in physics and in art and design. Teaching in these subjects is characterised by good levels of challenge, which stem from teachers' high expectations of what their students can achieve. In biology, for instance, probing questioning challenges students, often to deal with ideas that are more advanced than the course demands. Good feedback to those students on their success in dealing with this work inspires confidence in them and encourages them to strive even harder. This probing questioning is also a feature of many physics lessons. In art, the key to very good teaching is the highly effective support for students as they work on their individual studies. Consistent challenge and the encouragement to refine work enable students to achieve very good standards.
- 39 In most subjects, careful attention is paid to matching work to the needs of individuals. This is carefully undertaken in the early lessons in Year 12, where about a quarter of students on average are new to the college and may have followed different courses previously. Sensitive support for these students by all teachers helps them to become quickly integrated into lessons and college life in general. Whilst the needs of all students are generally met well, in several subjects a small number of the highest attaining students are not always sufficiently challenged. In geography, for instance, the pace of work in lessons is such that the most able students sometimes do not reach the extension work available and necessary to extend them sufficiently.
- 40 Good attention is paid, in all subjects, to the development of students' skills in written and spoken language. This supports their learning subject by subject and enriches their general command of language. This is particularly true of students for whom English is an additional language. These students are well supported and generally make very good progress. Only occasionally do these students have difficulty and that is with advanced technical language such as occurs in science subjects.

Teachers are aware of the need to provide extra support in these instances and seek to do so sensitively. Where relevant, students apply their mathematical skills well and very good use is made of information and communication technology skills to enrich learning in all subjects.

HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS OR STUDENTS?

- 41 Overall, the quality and the range of the curriculum are very good at Key Stages 3 and 4. The good curriculum provided at the time of the last inspection has been imaginatively developed to provide pathways to success for all students in the college. Though there is significant emphasis on science, mathematics and technology, in keeping with a city technology college, there are wider opportunities on offer beyond these in order to reflect the college's vision.
- 42 The distinctive and innovative features of the college's curriculum contribute strongly to enriching the educational experiences of its students. Flexibility and additional time are provided by the 33-hour teaching week, the two-week timetable and the continuous daily timetable. This enables a wide range of courses to be provided for students of all abilities.
- 43 The very good whole-college approach to planning the curriculum is particularly effective at Key Stage 3. In addition to the subjects of the National Curriculum, all students are introduced to the world of work through a very well-structured business studies course and work shadowing in Year 9, whilst many curriculum areas contribute to the Year 8 Trade Fair. This is just one of the themed modules that cross subject boundaries and make the curriculum more cohesive and meaningful for students.
- 44 The curriculum at Key Stage 4 also provides very rich and varied opportunities for all students to broaden their experiences. Students can study up to 13 GCSE subjects covering all the requirements of the National Curriculum. Those for whom a strictly academic route is unsuitable can choose a more vocational route with three subjects at GNVQ, short GCSE courses and Certificate of Achievement. The compulsory 'Survival' course also makes students aware of moral aspects and appropriately focuses their attention on the next steps in their careers.
- 45 Throughout the college, students with special educational needs are well provided for at both key stages. Individual education plans are very effectively used by teachers to identify and address students' individual learning needs. Teachers work closely with learning support assistants, who have an excellent awareness of the students' needs. The provision of a suitable curriculum and teaching strategies to meet the differing needs is good in all subjects and particularly good in science and physical education. It is less developed in modern foreign languages at Key Stage 4. The provision for students with statements of special educational needs is very effectively implemented.
- 46 There are good and effective strategies for teaching literacy and numeracy. The college literacy policy is thorough and helpful. Teachers in Year 7 reinforce the students' understanding of language from Key Stage 2. There are good, planned opportunities for reading in most subjects and the college library is used well by students to support their reading development. The whole-college policy on numeracy is less comprehensive, but all curriculum areas have clear policies and there is good provision for the development of students' number skills in most subjects. Mathematics, science, design and technology, ICT and modern foreign

languages are particularly strong in providing effective contexts for developing students' mathematical skills.

- 47 The good basic curriculum is significantly strengthened by the very effective programme of enrichment activities⁵. In addition to the many excellent and well-supported sporting activities, there are regular drama, dance and music clubs provided by the performing arts staff. Regular local visits are arranged in history, science and geography, together with residential visits to Spain, Germany, France and Italy help to widen students' cultural horizons. Students fully involve themselves in raising money for charity, especially Children in Need. Subject staff frequently arrange curriculum events for students and parents, such as mathematics and drama evenings.
- 48 The college provides very good access to all parts of the curriculum for all students. A clear policy on equal opportunities is very evident in many of its procedures. Staff and students are treated equally, with a shared restaurant, shared toilets, common lounge areas and a dress code for staff and students. This generates mutual respect and very good, calm, mature relationships between teachers and students. The rich variety of academic, vocational, work-related and social experiences cater well for the needs, interests and aptitudes of each individual, regardless of race, gender or background. However, provision for the gifted and talented students is less well developed in some subjects, including geography, music, English, design and technology, modern foreign languages and ICT.
- 49 There is a good provision for personal, social and health education in the college. Sex, drugs and health education are successfully provided for by a well co-ordinated teaching programme involving religious studies and science. Provision is monitored effectively by the directors of study for both key stages. Aspects of citizenship are dealt with well through college gatherings, tutor periods and work in a range of subjects. The tutorial periods, with two small tutor groups shared between two tutors, bring many benefits for students' personal and social education. Students gain support and guidance from older students and have time to discuss their progress with their tutor.
- 50 The programme of careers and vocational guidance in the college is very good. Vocational aspects of work are a feature throughout the college. For example, Year 7 have an induction programme organised by a leading local engineering company, and Year 8 students enthusiastically take on the roles of business people in a Trade Fair. A fortnightly careers lesson at Key Stage 4, together with work experience in Year 10, which is very thoroughly prepared and monitored, represent a marked improvement on the situation when the college was last inspected. Students at Key Stage 4 also benefit from the successful GNVQ courses.
- 51 The curriculum is enriched extensively through the school's very good links with the local community from which students benefit both academically and socially. Many parents volunteer help in the print room, on visits and in classrooms, often through a Parents Link System. A team of volunteers from the local church has been trained as examination invigilators, thus freeing teaching staff from this administrative task. Links with local trade and industry have been much strengthened since the last report. The college is exceptionally well used by the community for adult education, mainly through a harmonious working link with a local college of further education. Many students gain confidence by participating in the local community activities.

⁵ Enrichment activities are similar to those known in most schools as extra-curricular activities.

- 52 Overall, the college has good links with partner institutions. Induction of Year 6 into the college is well organised. All college staff are involved in visiting the 60 partner primary schools to collect informal information and promote good relationships. Year 7 students are sympathetically eased into their new environment through a very successful two-day induction co-ordinated by a major local employer. Masterclasses in numeracy, ICT and technology are provided for higher attaining Year 6 pupils, while primary school teachers learn ICT skills at the college. Liaison with higher and further education institutions is well developed and provides a smooth transition for students into their next stage of education.
- 53 There is very good provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and this supports the college aim of assisting the development of each student as well as enhancing the development of the college as a community.
- 54 The provision for students' spiritual development is good and has improved since it was identified as an area for development at the time of the last inspection. There are now more opportunities provided for students to be involved in activities such as discussions about fundamental beliefs, involvement in imaginative experiences or to reflect upon their own experiences. Religious education encourages students to recognise and consider the links between spiritual and moral issues, for example through a study focusing on medical ethics. Activities in drama and the links formed between religious education and other subjects have increased the opportunities for students to recognise a spiritual dimension within the subjects they study. In spite of these developments, opportunities to provide a spiritual dimension for students are not consistently identified, delivered or monitored in all subjects.
- 55 All students take part in a weekly act of collective worship through the *Gathering*⁶. This is a very well planned experience for the college community and involves staff and students in the design and leadership of a co-ordinated set of themes, which have a religious or moral theme. There is a clear focus on including Christian festivals and those of other faiths. There is good involvement of representatives of the local community in the presentation of a number of the themes. The daily tutorial sessions provide a *thought for the day*, which often has a clear moral dimension but does not sufficiently address religious issues to ensure that the college meets the requirement to provide all its students with a daily act of collective worship. There is evidence of some well-planned and relevant activities, but overall the quality of presentation, level of student involvement and opportunities for prayer or reflection vary considerably.
- 56 The provision the college makes for students' moral development is very good. All members of the college feel they are part of a community. This feeling supports the development of very good behaviour in lessons and around the college. Within some of the daily tutorial sessions, students of different ages join together to think about moral issues, enabling them to form their own opinions. In lessons, students are encouraged to participate in a range of discussion activities. Subjects such as English and religious education use discussion to promote good understanding of moral issues such as war and abortion. Sixth form students studying ICT show good understanding when discussing the issue of confidentiality related to the handling of personal data. The mature attitude and good behaviour encouraged by the college are very effective in supporting students' moral development.

⁶ The college provides for each student to attend one gathering each week. A quarter of vertically grouped tutor groups attends on four days of the week. This event fulfils similar functions to an assembly in most schools.

- 57 Provision for students' social development is very good as a result of the provision of a wide range of activities, both within and outside lessons, for students to work together. A wide range of sporting activities enables students to participate and achieve success in individual and competitive activities. The annual *Trade Fair* enables younger students to work together on planning and developing products, which they present to representatives from the local business community. College events such as the *Caribbean Evening* and the *Performing Arts Evening* are only two examples of the many college activities that fully involve a wide range of students in their planning, organisation and presentation. The college Student Council enables students of all ages to be involved in generating ideas for the development of the college, but its role in the college's decision-making processes is not sufficiently developed for it to have high status in the minds of all students.
- 58 The provision for students' cultural development is very good. This represents an improvement from the time of the last inspection when the multi-cultural dimension was not sufficiently developed. The promotion of positive attitudes to different cultures is helped, for example, through the study of different foods in food technology and the work of artists in studies of art in different parts of the world. Students' participation in celebrating key events in the life of different faiths as a part of the regular college *Gathering* does much to enhance all students' awareness and understanding of different cultures. Many visits are undertaken and this successfully helps raise cultural awareness as well as developing subject knowledge. The high level of student participation in the youth theatre and in musical performance further supports students' cultural awareness. The college is successfully finding opportunities for students to contribute to the local community with, for example, students performing plays to a senior citizens group and encouraging audience participation through songs of the past.

Sixth form

- 59 The curriculum provided in the sixth form is designed to build on the experiences of earlier years. Those students arriving in the sixth form from other institutions are well informed about the college's particular focus on science and technology and the expectations contained within it. Students receive good and impartial advice about the sixth form provision. Particular care is taken to ensure that college programmes match the requirements and aspirations of the students.
- 60 Opportunities and expectations are fully explained during a comprehensive and well integrated induction programme, developed and delivered in conjunction with a leading high street bank. The programme ensures that students coming into the college for the first time understand the philosophy and appreciate the high demands that will be placed on them. It also enables students to get to know those who have joined from other schools. Every effort is made to accommodate students' subject choices within the relatively large range on offer. The college provides 18 advanced level courses as well as a small selection of advanced vocational courses. In line with the focus of the college, the bias of advanced level subjects is to science and technology. However, business, languages and humanities are also offered. The college has begun to develop relationships with other providers so that the needs of students who wish to study courses other than those provided by the college can be met.
- 61 The college ensures that students gain a breadth of experiences by providing a core programme, which incorporates key skills, general studies, physical education, work placements and careers guidance. This core provision is well received by the

students and provides considerable relevant enrichment to their chosen courses. The core programme does not include the statutory requirement of a course in religious education for all students. Further opportunities for personal development are available in the form of Young Enterprise, Sports Leader Award and the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme. In addition, students can pursue interests in the performing arts. The range of compulsory and optional activities linked to students' chosen subjects provides them with a rich, full and demanding curriculum. The programmes offered make a strong contribution to their continuing spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

- 62 All students have equal access to all aspects of the programmes in the sixth form. Within their individual programmes students have a good balance of taught and individual study time. The college operates a demanding schedule but one which the students appreciate and fully subscribe to. An effective careers programme is in place. Within this programme, work placement in Year 12 results in very good involvement with a network of local companies. Students are helped to develop interview skills, preparing a *curriculum vitae* and a personal statement for university applications. They receive a very detailed handbook for the higher education application process. Support for making university applications is very well structured and students appreciate the high degree of personal support they receive. The placement activity ensures that the considerable community links that the college has are maintained and frequently expanded.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

- 63 The college takes very good care of all its students, as it was doing at the time of the previous inspection. It successfully meets its aim to create an environment in which all people are valued and respected. Staff spend considerable time and energy building excellent relationships with students. They are then able to identify and meet individual needs as they arise. The unusual vertical tutor group organisation⁷ is the major strength of the pastoral system at the college. Students benefit enormously from having significant daily contact with their personal tutor, a 'buddy tutor'⁸ and with students from all other year groups. Most tutor periods are well managed, enjoyed by students and provide a good range of activities to support students' learning. A genuine family feel emerges, helping new students quickly feel not only safe and secure in the college, but also valued and valuable. The good induction procedures for new students also facilitate their successful introduction to the college. All staff are involved in the process of visiting the many primary schools that are sending pupils to the college.
- 64 Excellent relationships exist between all members of the college community. The college has established very good administrative and communication systems. E-mail, for example, is used very effectively, both internally and externally. These very positive features of college life ensure fast, easy, relaxed and accurate communication between all adults in the college, particularly about students' needs.
- 65 Support staff make very positive contributions to both students' learning and their welfare in college. The general office runs very smoothly and the attitudes and skills of the catering staff enable students and staff to benefit from healthy food in a pleasant atmosphere. The college is kept very clean and in very good condition.

⁷ Each tutor group is made up of a small number of students from each year group from Year 7 to Year 13.

⁸ Tutor groups are paired and share the sessions together.

This both ensures a healthy environment for staff and students and successfully stimulates students to care for their environment.

- 66 Arrangements to promote regular attendance are very good. The swipe card system works well and helps students manage their own attendance record.
- 67 Parents recognise and support the very good arrangements in place for encouraging students to behave well. Almost all the staff have very high expectations of their students, expecting them to take responsibility for their own behaviour and encouraging them to recognise immediately when these standards are not maintained. Only very occasionally are expectations neither clearly nor consistently expressed and only a few students experience difficulty in conforming to the college's code. A 'quiet word', the recognised sanction for misbehaving students, and support plans are carefully used to encourage these students to improve their behaviour. The college has very good procedures for eliminating oppressive behaviour, only rarely using exclusion as the ultimate sanction.
- 68 The vertical tutor system, the rota systems in place for breaks during the school day, the swipe card system and the layout of the buildings and grounds have all been carefully and deliberately planned to promote students' safety and security. Good arrangements are in place to ensure the overall health and safety of the community. Sick and injured students are looked after expertly in a very pleasant and carefully situated medical room. Very good child protection arrangements are further enhanced by the very acute knowledge that each tutor has of their individual students.
- 69 Arrangements for assessing how students are getting on in their studies are good and satisfactory use is made of resulting information. Departments use national tests and make good use of their own procedures for assessing students' work. Staff in departments such as science and business studies have taken these good assessment arrangements further and use the results very carefully to guide the department's future activities. Teachers accurately and regularly record each student's performance in specific areas of the subject. They then make very good use of this information to identify and share the next piece of learning for each student and the means of acquiring it. This accurate and detailed target setting is not yet a feature of all departments. However, the college is beginning to make good use of the large amount of data it has about individuals and groups of students to track, compare, predict and motivate.
- 70 Very good procedures are in place for supporting and assessing those students with special educational needs and English as an additional language. Students feel very appreciative of the informal and sensitive support provided by the college. Staff carefully gather progress review sheets for all students from all subject tutors before they prepare reports. Very good individual education plans are provided for those with special educational needs. These plans contain clear targets and are reviewed at least twice annually, taking careful heed of the views and concerns of parents.
- 71 The college provides excellent role models for its students regarding disability with the full inclusion of disabled students and the excellent community links with disabled people. Just one example of this was the powerful contribution made by a blind man to a mathematics lesson where he talked about his strategies for performing mental calculations.
- 72 Procedures for monitoring and supporting students' academic progress have improved since the previous inspection and are now good. Teachers generally share

assessment results with their students and identify what improvement is necessary. Although this guidance is very supportive and helpful, students do not always appreciate exactly what they have to do to improve because guidance is not always sufficiently specific. The personal tutor has a good overview of each of their students' progress and attitude and has regular and effective daily contact with them. This ensures very good personal support and guidance. Staff are very quick to identify any change in a student's approach and incidents of unsatisfactory behaviour are carefully monitored. The college checks the use of the rewards procedures, both to ensure parity and to recognise the improvement in effort or attitude of individual students. Annual reports to parents clearly identify the characteristics and progress of their children and usually suggest areas for improvement. Very good guidance is given to all students about future options, either when they transfer between stages within the college or leave for further education or employment.

Sixth form

73 Sixth form students are very well cared for. They benefit from the excellent relationships that exist in the school community and are well supported by all staff in their work and leisure activities. Staff know them very well and spend considerable time ensuring that they are happy and successful in their studies. Communication about students' needs flows very effectively between tutors and teachers. The college has good arrangements for ensuring the health and safety of all its sixth form students.

Assessment

74 Good procedures are in place to assess the work of students in the sixth form. Departments have clear procedures which students understand. Work is regularly marked and students are given a clear description of how they are progressing. Regular recording of results and effort grades are in place in all subjects. Good use is made of this information to identify where students have weaknesses and to help them improve. In some departments the procedures are very good, with work frequently set, carefully marked and very quickly returned. Students value teacher comments and are confident that if there is a serious weakness in the quality of the work the tutor will make a point of discussing issues with the student. They are becoming increasingly skilled in their ability to evaluate their own work as a result of good guidance by teachers.

Advice, support and guidance

75 Very good guidance is provided for sixth form students. The meaningful daily contact with the personal tutor ensures that students are very well known and any changes in demeanour quickly noticed. Students are very confident that their individual needs will be recognised and are secure in their approach to staff. They know that any problems, whether personal or academic, will be quickly and sensitively addressed. The college attempts to ensure that the individual student's personal tutor is also one of their subject teachers. This ensures daily contact with at least one of their subject teachers. Students are carefully helped to recognise their own achievement and effort through the termly use of a clear grading system. They are then encouraged to set targets for themselves in all their subjects. They are quite clear about the improvement that is required and how to secure that improvement. The college provides very good advice to help them choose their careers. Staff sensitively support their choices, guiding them towards relevant courses and helping them complete their applications.

76 A few pupils with English as an additional language experience minor difficulties in some A-level subjects where their understanding of technical terms is not always

secure. Otherwise, they are well integrated into all aspects of college life and work and are able to make good progress.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

- 77 All parents, including those of sixth form students, are very supportive of the college and applaud its many strengths. The concerns expressed by a few parents about the information they receive, the way the school works with parents and the amount of homework are unjustified. The college is very successful in its objective of engaging parents and guardians as partners in the education of their children and this represents an improvement since the previous inspection.
- 78 The college welcomes its parents and members of staff are open in their approach to them. Staff commit significant time and energy to communicating with parents, listening carefully to their queries and diligently following up concerns. Very good use is made of e-mail to communicate with parents where this is possible. The welcome extended to parents and visitors by the office staff is friendly and efficient. This initial welcome is further enhanced by the attractive and interesting college environment. The atmosphere in the entrance hall is delightful, giving the visitor an immediate impression of a happy, busy and harmonious community. Displays around the college are lively, informative and invigorating.
- 79 The college now produces a good range of information for parents. The termly newsletter, an innovation since the previous inspection, is expertly produced and clearly reflects the rich variety which characterises the life of the college. Information provided about individual students is also good. Annual reports contain full and detailed information about what each student can and cannot do in all subject areas. Many reports contain good descriptions of what the student needs to do next to improve. The reporting of personal development is very good. It is clear from the reports that personal tutors have a very thorough knowledge of their students.
- 80 Parents of all students, including those in the sixth form, are formally invited to discuss their child's progress with the personal tutor on at least two occasions each year. These consultations are immensely valuable as they are with the one person in the college who has the overview of the child's progress in all subjects and activities. Parents are given as long as they need and further appointments are made with subject tutors as required. Whilst most parents are hugely supportive of this system and value the in-depth conversations that emerge, a few still do not fully appreciate the benefits. Parents of sixth form students have discussions with both personal and learning tutors.
- 81 The college actively encourages parents to involve themselves in college life. A database of skills and interests is collected from Year 7 parents. The college makes good use of this database. For instance, parents help in the print room and with administration work. Parental help is both valued and valuable. This recognition also applies to the support given to the many extension activities available for students. Parents are energetic in their support of school trips, with volunteers always forthcoming when required.
- 82 Parents are helped to involve themselves in their sons' and daughters' learning by the regular use made of the students' organisers. These are effectively used to communicate messages and efficiently checked by personal tutors. Most but not all parents understand the college's approach to extension work. Students are encouraged to do the bulk of their extension work during the college day. This is a deliberate college strategy designed to enable students to manage their own

learning. Whilst very successfully fostering independence in the student, this can restrict parental opportunity to do homework with their children. The college is, however, introducing a section on the annual report indicating what sort of help parents can offer in those areas where weakness is identified.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

- 83 The college is exceptionally well led by an extremely able, active and sensitive principal. He is given very able and effective support by all staff in the college and by a well-informed and committed governing body. The single, most remarkable, aspect of the life and work of the college is the way in which all who work there, whether they are students, teachers, support staff or governors, have a clear understanding of the aims and mission of the college. The level of commitment is very high and the college can be said to live out its aims in full.
- 84 The aims of the college focus sharply on helping each individual to develop in their unique way, including helping them to achieve the best of which they are capable. As a city technology college, the college rightly places emphasis on education in science, mathematics and technology. It is, however, very successful in ensuring that the range of curriculum provision ensures that all students receive a rounded education. It also provides a very comprehensive range of enrichment activities⁹, particularly in sports and the performing arts. This helps students develop a wide range of interests beyond their lessons.
- 85 The principal has been in post since shortly after the previous inspection. He has been instrumental in a radical review of the college management structure. This has led to much greater delegation of responsibility which has, in turn, been a major factor in improving the effectiveness of directors of study and curriculum leaders. In all of this work he has been very well supported by his vice-principals and the director of finance and administration, who make up the college's management team. At the time of the previous inspection, relationships between the senior staff and the governing body were not effective. The principal has worked very closely with the chair of the governing body to remedy this situation and now the working partnership between staff and governors is very impressive.
- 86 Another major improvement in the college since the previous inspection has been the strengthening of the link between planning for development in the college and financial management. The college now has in place a very effective process of planning for institutional development. This is built on a rolling three-year programme to which all staff and governors contribute. From this long-term plan is developed a very detailed annual plan for development. Both the long-term and annual detailed plans are integrally linked to the budget planning and monitoring cycle, which is very efficiently managed by the director of finance and administration.
- 87 A key feature of the success of the plans for development is the review of progress as a starting point for planning further action. This review is part of a wider culture of monitoring and review that pervades the college. Monitoring and evaluation of work in subject areas, regular review of the implementation of college policies and a general climate where staff consistently question the effect of their work are cornerstones in bringing about the improvements evident in the college. The commitment of the college as a whole to further improvement is outstanding and the

⁹ The college programme of enrichment activities is similar to that which, in many schools, is called extra-curricular activities. The college is keen to stress that these activities are seen as an extension of the normal lesson-based curriculum, as opposed to being an 'add-on' extra.

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capacity to succeed further is excellent. The college applies the principles of best value very effectively in all aspects of its work.

- 88 Governors have a very clear understanding of their responsibilities and they discharge these very effectively. Through a committee structure, governors are all able to play an active part in the life and work of the college. Whilst some do not live locally and thus do not frequently see the college at work on a -to-day basis, all have a good grasp of the strengths of the college and of what they wish to see improved still further. Governors are fully involved in helping shape the strategic direction of the college, play a full part as critical friends and undertake their evaluative role seriously. They fulfil all their statutory duties, other than to ensure that all students have a daily act of collective worship and that sixth form students have an adequate course in religious education.
- 89 Financial management in the college is very good. Governors are involved in budget setting and monitoring and they ensure that spending priorities are firmly linked to educational needs. Careful attention is paid to ensuring that sufficient resources are allocated to the maintenance and renewal of resources, buildings and fittings. Specific grants are used effectively for their appropriate purpose. Financial administration is very efficient. More generally, the team of staff who provide support in order to enable the core work of teaching to take place effectively are very well co-ordinated. They are all fully committed to the aims of the college and work extremely hard to support these. The general administration of the college is very efficient. Site management, cleaning, technician and catering staff also make a significant contribution to the very effective operation of the college.
- 90 An unusual feature of the college is the highly effective use that it makes of new technology, both in teaching and in general college administration. In almost all subjects, computers are used successfully to enhance learning. Throughout the college, areas are networked and hence messages are transmitted efficiently and speedily. The college is making very good use of computing facilities to build up detailed profiles of the academic progress of students and this is beginning to be used very well by tutors. Further extension of the use of this information is a point for development in the college.
- 91 The college is fully staffed with hard-working teachers whose qualifications match the demands of the subjects they teach. This is a major factor in guaranteeing consistently good teaching throughout the college. Support and administrative staff are fully involved and their professional development, like that of teachers, is carefully attended to. Arrangements for the performance management of teachers are fully in place. The college has very successful induction arrangements, both for teachers new to the college and to the profession. Arrangements for supporting teachers in training are also very good.
- 92 A major factor in helping to create a positive environment for working is the attractive building. This provides well for the vast majority of subjects. Staff maintain the building in immaculate condition. It is clean and tidy and is a credit to those staff who maintain it. There is a well-managed programme of refurbishment and re-decoration, designed to maintain the environment in excellent condition. A building programme is currently under way to provide for a larger restaurant and a much improved resources and information centre. Testimony to the smooth operation of the college is the negligible impact that the building programme has had on the work of the college.

- 93 The college is well resourced in all aspects of the curriculum. This represents a major improvement on the previous inspection. The quality of resources available is very good. The extension of the library information centre will further enhance the use that students make of this resource. The college is very well equipped with computers and related hardware and software. These resources are used very effectively to enhance learning, particularly in design and technology, music, business studies and science. Relatively limited use of technology is made in history, art, physical education and religious education.
- 94 Overall, the college is very effective. It takes in students whose abilities closely reflect the national profile of ability. Through a very good range of subjects, taught consistently well, it enables all students to make very good progress and achieve standards that are well above the national average. Co-ordinated by excellent leadership and very good management, the college makes very good use of the resources available to it and gives good value for money.

Sixth form

Leadership and management

- 95 Leadership and management of the sixth form are very good. The nature and structure of the college is such that sixth form work is fully integrated into the wider provision. The college works to a clear vision, which encompasses all students from 11 to 18 years. This positively supports the sixth form rationale of fully equipping students for their future in an increasingly technological world. The relationship between the main college and the sixth form is so well integrated it is almost seamless. This underpins the very good achievements. Students entering the sixth form either from Year 11 or from other schools understand what is expected of them and appreciate the very good support they are given to achieve those expectations. Quality is assured through very good monitoring systems, linked to highly effective support from personal tutors and subject teachers. Comprehensive analysis and evaluation of student performance ensures that, through good teaching, there is considerable success in external examinations. The governors are fully involved in the life of the sixth form, supporting its work fully. Priorities are clearly linked to those of the college, with regular reviews of the whole curriculum offered. The vice-principal responsible for day-to-day management ensures that all tutors are fully trained to support the individual needs of sixth form students. This is achieved through professional development programmes linked to the very effective college performance management system. Recent staffing changes have seen the involvement of another member of staff to assist in the day- to-day administration and organisation of the sixth form. The sixth form is well resourced and staffed and is very cost-effective. Links with other organisations, including higher education institutions, are extensive and well managed.

Resources

- 96 All staff who teach in the sixth form are suitably qualified. They are, therefore, able to present lessons in interesting and challenging ways and to respond to the needs of students. Resources in the sixth form are adequate and of good quality. Students have good levels of access to computers and related equipment in all subjects and make good use of these. Within the next month the refurbished information centre will provide a suite of study areas for students, whose access to computers for individual private study will also be enhanced. Accommodation is generally adequate and classrooms are well equipped. There is no room for students to continue food technology into the sixth form.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

97 In order to build on the very good work being undertaken throughout the college, staff and governors should:

- Improve the way that assessment information is used to support students' learning, by:
 - Ensuring that the best practice in the college is shared across all subject areas;
 - Helping departments make regular and effective use of the wealth of data available about students' attainment and progress;
 - Identifying in more detail what each student needs to do next to improve;
 - Establishing and promoting a clear timetable for student review and target setting sessions with tutors.

(paragraphs 34, 69, 70, 74, 104, 115, 124, 139, 151, 156, 189, 209, 245, 270 and 276)

- Ensure that the most able students in the college achieve their full potential, by
 - Identifying their specific needs;
 - Meeting those needs by planning challenging work.

(paragraphs 26, 39, 103, 112, 116, 155, 173, 197, 206, 220 and 268)

Sixth form

- Ensure that the college fully meets the requirement to provide a course in religious education for all students in the sixth form.

(paragraphs 61 and 88)

In addition, the college should include the following issue in its action plan:

- Ensure that the college fully meets the requirement to provide for all students to have a daily act of collective worship.

(paragraphs 55 and 88)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 – 11	136
	Sixth form	59
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		90

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Years 7 – 11							
Number	9	44	58	25	0	0	0
Percentage	7	32	43	18	0	0	0
Sixth form							
Number	2	17	33	7	0	0	0
Percentage	3	29	56	12	0	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting the percentages for the sixth form as each lesson represents more than one percentage point.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y 7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	786	229
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	78	n/a

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	55	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	3	0

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	98

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	9
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	13

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.8
National comparative data	7.7

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.2
National comparative data	1.1

Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 (Year 9)

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2000	80	80	160

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 5 and above	Boys	68	73	64
	Girls	78	73	69
	Total	146	146	133
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	School	91 (80)	91 (87)	84 (80)
	National	63 (63)	62 (62)	59 (55)
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 6 or above	School	49 (33)	69 (67)	43 (41)
	National	28 (28)	42 (38)	30 (23)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 5 and above	Boys	55	74	70
	Girls	72	76	69
	Total	127	150	139
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	School	79 (75)	94 (85)	87 (81)
	National	64 (64)	66 (64)	62 (60)
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 6 or above	School	37 (28)	77 (61)	48 (46)
	National	31 (31)	39 (37)	29 (28)

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 (Year 11)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	79	74	153

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*- G	1 or more grades A*- G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	54	78	79
	Girls	54	72	72
	Total	108	150	151
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	71 (86)	98 (99)	99 (99)
	National	47.4 (46.6)	90.6 (90.9)	95.6

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	51
	National	38.4

Figures in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

Vocational qualifications	Number	% success rate
Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	0
	National	n/a

Attainment at the end of the sixth form (Year 13)

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	52	53	105

Average A/AS points score per candidate	For candidates entered for 2 or more A-levels or equivalent			For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A-levels or equivalent		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	17.7	19.5	18.7	3.5	2.5	3.2
National	17.7	18.6	18.2	2.6	2.9	2.7

Figures in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

Vocational qualifications	Number	% success rate
Number in their final year of studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	0
	National	76.5

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	17
Black – African heritage	1
Black – other	11
Indian	81
Pakistani	43
Bangladeshi	3
Chinese	8
White	817
Any other minority ethnic group	34

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	1	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	1	0
Indian	2	0
Pakistani	3	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	19	1
Other minority ethnic groups	1	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	68.2
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	14.9

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	15.6
Total aggregate hours worked per week	604

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	70.2
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y13

Key Stage 3	21.9
Key Stage 4	21.3
Sixth form	19.9

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2000 - 2001
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	£
Total income	3,356,315
Total expenditure	3,288,452
Expenditure per pupil	3,172
Balance brought forward from previous year	115,048
Balance carried forward to next year	182,911

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	18
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	17

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	2
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1015
Number of questionnaires returned	139

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	55	39	5	1	0
My child is making good progress in school.	52	44	4	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	36	52	7	1	4
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	28	51	17	2	2
The teaching is good.	45	48	3	0	4
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	47	37	12	4	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	63	30	4	3	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	75	24	1	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	43	40	13	4	0
The school is well led and managed.	61	34	2	1	2
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	64	30	1	1	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	55	35	5	0	5

Other issues raised by parents

In addition to responses to questionnaires, 59 parents attended a meeting with the Registered Inspector before the inspection, one parent met with an inspector during the inspection week and 22 parents appended comments to the questionnaires. In all cases, parents' comments bear out the pattern from the questionnaires.

PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4

ENGLISH

Overall, the quality of provision in English is good.

Strengths

- Examination results are steadily improving.
- Teaching in the department is enthusiastic and committed.
- The standards of speaking and listening are very high.
- Students are good at analysing literature and have good skills in annotating texts.

Areas for improvement

- Work for higher attaining students is not clearly planned in Years 7 to 9.
- Too many lessons are slow to get under way and students take too long to focus on the work in hand.
- A minority of students lack pride in the presentation of their written work. They have little sense of the audience they are writing for.

- 98 Results in examinations are improving at a steady rate for both boys and girls at both Key Stages 3 and 4, but not all students achieve their potential by attaining the highest levels in GCSE.
- 99 Standards in speaking and listening are very high. Students are confident and articulate in a range of situations, both formal and informal. In Year 7 they relate stories from their own experiences, using appropriate intonation and pausing for effect in delivering the final lines. They develop their range of oral skills in drama, where very structured teaching helps them to use such devices as eye contact and other body language to create the right tone and to establish empathy with their audience. Students listen well to each other, contribute to group discussions and learn from what goes on around them. In a very good lesson in Year 11, there was an excellent discussion generated by the students on the characters of *Macbeth* and his wife. In role-play, they showed an understanding of the complexity of the themes and reacted well in the 'hot-seat' to questions from the rest of the class. The teacher managed the session well and linked the ideas put forward, clarifying and amplifying where necessary, to ensure all students were involved.
- 100 Reading is good. Students have plenty of opportunities to read aloud in class and those who find reading difficult have a mentor to help them. They read out their own stories clearly and engage the listeners. Their stories show a good grasp of language structure and students use lively and interesting vocabulary. In older classes, students read parts in Shakespeare with clarity and understanding, bringing even difficult sections of plays to life.
- 101 Standards in writing are more variable. Though the work is usually above the average expected, some written pieces have a tendency to be short and under-developed. They are also untidy and show little appreciation for the reader. There are significant exceptions, however. Work produced on the word processor is often attractively presented. The current Year 10 students are starting to produce highly diverting stories with atmospheric openings such as, "The fireflies jumped off the blade as it hit the cold, grey rock." Other pieces showed sharp observation of character and place and good control of convincing dialogue.

- 102 Students in both key stages show an ability to analyse and annotate poems, stories and plays. Teachers provide good models for students to follow and eventually many can take the lead in groups. The reporting back to the class, especially by higher attaining students, is often succinct and clear. Students with special educational needs take a full part in these lessons and are often good orally. In Years 7 and 8 they are given very good help by classroom learning assistants and support teachers so that they can reinforce their learning of basic skills. Those students who speak English as an additional language are very well integrated into lessons and often lead discussions with confidence. Many also produce very interesting written accounts of personal experiences.
- 103 The new teaching staff, five teachers out of six, are settling in well. The quality of teaching is at least good in seven out of ten lessons. Other lessons are satisfactory. Newly qualified teachers, who make up half the English teaching staff, are working hard to devise strategies to maintain good order and purposeful working in classes. This is their main area of weakness with some challenging groups. All teachers have enthusiasm and good subject knowledge and use resources well. The timing and pace of some lessons could be better and the pitch of the work for higher attaining students in mixed ability classes in Key Stage 3 is not always challenging enough. However, many lessons are characterised by varied teaching methods, good use of practical activities to keep students involved and a clear and useful summing up to show students how far they have progressed. The marking of students' work is very good by all teachers.
- 104 There is a good, varied curriculum provided in English and the teaching in drama helps students to improve, especially in Key Stage 3 in speaking and listening and in the study of Shakespeare. Teachers plan the use of a wide range of information and communication technology resources to supplement their modules of work. Curriculum leadership is lively and thoughtful. There are good plans to develop the subject further, including the recent introduction of a useful system for assessing students' progress and for setting them relevant and challenging future targets. There has been good progress since the last inspection, particularly in creative writing.

Drama

Overall, the quality of provision in drama is very good.

Strengths

- The very good teaching is consistently well planned.
- Students respond well to the teacher's high expectations of them.
- They produce very interesting collaborative work.
- The subject makes a real contribution to students' personal and social development.

Areas for improvement

- There could be more formal links with the English department.

- 105 Drama is part of the performing arts faculty in Key Stage 3. Standards of work seen are very high. A very new Year 7 class showed poise and control in their lesson where they had to produce a tableau and follow it up with a mime. Groups co-operated well, their movements were co-ordinated and they performed with confidence. The teacher quickly established a clear structure for the lesson, which gave all students the security to try out new ideas. Their evaluations of the work

were perceptive and useful. In older classes, students build on this good foundation and produce work of increasing complexity.

- 106 Drama makes a very good contribution to students' social and personal development. Group work is consistently good. Boys and girls from a range of different ethnic backgrounds get on well together and work harmoniously. In a Year 9 lesson, a mixed group produced an extract of 'political theatre' where the theme of racism was very sensitively and seriously explored.
- 107 Teaching is always very good. Students know that, when they come into drama, they have to give of their best and most try to do this. The curriculum is very well planned and includes video production and editing as well as an introduction to Stanislavski and Brecht. The high standards in drama reported in the last inspection have been maintained.

MATHEMATICS

This is a very good department with many strengths.

Strengths

- Teaching is never less than satisfactory and in two-thirds of lessons it is good or better.
- Standards achieved by students at Key Stage 3 in national tests are very high.
- Results at GCSE are consistently above national averages for grades A* - C.
- The positive attitudes and relationships contribute greatly to the standards achieved by students.
- The taught course for mathematics is enhanced by many opportunities to explore it in other contexts.
- The management and the educational leadership of the department are very good.

Areas for improvement

- Greater consistency in teaching standards and in the management of students.
- Consistent use of the words displayed in classrooms to enhance and development students' literacy skills and the language used in mathematics.
- Better use made of assessment data to inform curriculum planning and to assist students with setting targets for improvement.

- 108 Standards of attainment by students by the end of Year 9 in 2000 were very high when compared with national averages and similar schools. The proportion of students achieving Level 7 or above is well above national averages. Boys and girls consistently achieve very similar standards in all aspects of the mathematics curriculum. The unconfirmed results for 2001 show further improvements, particularly at Level 7 or above. The standards in mathematics compare very favourably with those of English and science. Overall, standards in Key Stage 3 continue to improve.
- 109 Standards achieved by students at GCSE A* to C grades fell in 2000 when compared to previous years, but were still above the national average. The proportion of girls achieving the higher grades fell sharply in 2000 compared with the previous year, and was below the national average for girls. The percentage of students achieving the very high grade A* was below that achieved nationally. The unconfirmed results for 2001 show a marked improvement with girls achieving a slightly higher proportion of the higher grades. Considering the average point score achieved by students, the college's performance at GCSE is improving.

- 110 All students continue to develop their numerical skills through their mathematics. There are a number of opportunities through cross-college themes for students to use these skills. For example, in a food and drink project in Year 8, students collected data on students' choice of food and drink and displayed the results in different formats. Students are generally confident with number calculations and they work in fractions, decimals and percentages with relative confidence. These skills are enhanced further by work from other subjects. For example, in design and technology, students measure accurately the quantity of material needed for a construction project. In geography, students make full use of a range of diagrams to depict data collected from research into population and other factors associated with a country. They have developed good estimation skills and can calculate values to a given degree of accuracy. Students use a calculator confidently. They make full use of the available functions to perform intricate calculations, for example, in a trial and improvement method to find the square root of a given number.
- 111 Students in Key Stage 3 make very good progress. Higher attaining students are achieving well across all aspects of the curriculum. They are set challenging work that extends their knowledge and understanding in line with that expected for the higher levels of national tests. For example, students in a Year 9 group drew sketches of the graphs of different linear equations. This was followed up by a lively discussion from which students learnt how to compare graphs and deduce a general rule for describing all straight lines. The more able students in this group moved swiftly onto considering how to use this knowledge with simultaneous equations. Students in a Year 7 group thoroughly enjoyed counting in decimals and translating them into fractions. The effective use of a counting stick by their teacher enables these students to gain a greater understanding of place value. Students with special educational needs make very good progress with their learning. They gain confidence with basic number work through well planned and structured learning materials.
- 112 At Key Stage 4, students build on their experiences from Year 9 and by the end of Year 11 they are achieving standards that are at least the national average or better. High attaining students in a Year 11 class were, for example, able to extend their knowledge of simultaneous equations by considering their graphs. Students with special educational needs in a Year 10 low ability set made extremely good progress with finding the length of the side of a square by a trial and improvement method. The support these students received from both their teacher and an assistant was outstanding and made a significant contribution to their learning. Another group of Year 10 students, working towards a number test, spent a productive lesson discussing and practising questions. These students lacked confidence with such aspects as rounding numbers to a set number of given decimal places, expanding number to a given power and working out factors. This well-managed lesson enabled students to consolidate their understanding of these basic number facts and be more confident in tackling examination type questions. Achievement and progress made by students with special educational needs is good. This is the result of good teaching and very well focused support. The achievement by high attaining students is variable between years and is weakest at Key Stage 4, where fewer students achieve the higher grade A* than students nationally. The quality of GCSE coursework produced by students is very high.
- 113 The quality of teaching in mathematics is good overall. In two-thirds of the lesson it is good or better. Very good teaching occurs in just over a third of lessons, the majority of these in Key Stage 3. This represents an improvement on the last inspection. Teachers work hard at planning interesting lessons that motivate and

stimulate students to learn, and this is improving the standards they achieve and the quality of their learning. All teachers have very good subject knowledge and use it effectively in their expositions, demonstrations and asking challenging questions of students. They make very good use of the time and resources available. They use the overhead projector, graphical calculator, white boards and computers very effectively throughout many lessons to support students' learning.

- 114 In the very good lessons, teaching is exemplified by well planned and structured activities. These lessons move at a brisk pace, where expectations of students are high and they are expected to succeed and make progress. The skilful mix of probing questions, discussion and a range of tasks enables every student to make good progress and achieve high standards. Tasks from the student guide are well matched to students' needs, but in some lessons expectations are unclear and students do not complete as much work as they are capable of doing. Teachers make substantial effort to integrate students with identified special educational needs into the teaching group. Teaching of basic numerical skills in all groups is very good and the results from regular testing of students support this position.
- 115 Relationships with students are very good and teachers have a very strong duty of care, interest and concern for their students. The result is that students gain good learning habits and display positive attitudes and good behaviour in lessons. Teachers assess student performance thoroughly through on-going assessment of extension work and end of module tests. Assessment records are detailed and provide valuable evidence from which a student's future attainment can be predicted. Students are expected to set learning targets and record these in their student guides. However, these targets are often insufficiently challenging and lose their value as a meaningful tool. They do not help a student to judge his or her own progress and gains in knowledge and understanding.
- 116 The management of students, although good in the majority of lessons seen, is not consistent across all teachers and teaching groups. In some lessons, predominantly at Key Stage 4, students are not focused enough and lack concentration, which results in some poor behaviour. Teachers do not use the words displayed around each classroom to secure greater understanding of words in common use in mathematics. Sometimes teachers do not give enough consideration to the skills students will need to use in the planning of the lesson and consequently students are unable to proceed at the pace expected. Some aspects of teachers' work do help students' learning. In a few lessons, the learning objectives are made known to the students at the start. Considerable benefits have arisen from teachers using short summaries to lessons in which they review progress with students against the objectives for the lesson. This, in turn, means that students and teachers are better placed to plan the links to the next lesson.
- 117 All the requirements of the National Curriculum are met at both key stages. The curriculum is broadened by a range of college themes and projects in which mathematics plays a central part. Displays of students' work are of high quality and do much to enhance students' learning. They reflect the department's aim to set mathematics in the context of other cultures and, therefore, make a direct contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The curriculum is enriched through a range of clubs and activities, including extra sessions for students seeking further help with their mathematics. Within the curriculum there are many well-planned opportunities for students to use information and communication technology facilities. All students are expected to undertake work from the enhancement programme in their own time. The college enters the *UK maths challenge* each year and enjoys strong links with universities and industry.

118 The department has excellent facilities and is very effectively led and managed. The director of studies provides very clear leadership and educational direction for the department. There is a strong team ethic and the delegation of responsibilities to staff within the department ensures that it is highly effective and efficiently run. Teachers are well qualified and are able to teach across the ability range and to all levels. The broad mix of youth and experience, male and female, act as excellent role models for students. Teachers exude enthusiasm for the subject and this is transmitted to students through their teaching. The department has made good progress since the last inspection. Its current policies are commensurate with those of the college and provide a very good basis for further improvement and development.

SCIENCE

Overall, the quality of provision in science is very good.

Strengths

- Students achieve very good standards in knowledge and understanding and perform very well in practical investigations because teachers set high expectations for students to engage in first hand scientific enquiry.
- The high qualifications and abilities of staff produce rich teaching. Teachers challenge and extend students, building very effectively on earlier learning.
- Relationships between teachers and their students are exemplary, encouraging them to achieve their best.
- Excellent leadership and management motivate a highly committed team, each one taking a full share of responsibility for continuing school improvement.

Areas for improvement

- The quality of personal guidance to students about making use of more specific subject targets.
- More regular use of information and communication technology in analysing and interpreting experimental data.

119 The inspection confirms national test and examination results. Attainment is well above average at the end of both key stages. The school sustains such creditable results because teachers have high expectations of what students can achieve, particularly through first hand enquiry and practical investigation.

120 Students reach very good standards in lessons. By the end of Key Stage 3, they have a very good grasp of how scientists conduct enquiry because the teacher has excellent skills in encouraging them to talk about their ideas. A Year 9 class, for instance, became more confident about how to plan and conduct an investigation to find out how the size of a parachute affects the time it takes to fall. Through investigation, they learned to be more independent because the teacher fostered a high sense of responsibility, expecting them to take the initiative. This was also seen in another Year 9 class where students weighed very accurately because the teacher trusted them to take care of expensive equipment. By Year 11, students of highest ability present reasoned arguments of excellent quality to explain experimental findings. Able girls gain an impressive theoretical understanding through excellent probing questions, enticing them to express their views about, for instance, particle theory. Students of all abilities refine their speaking and listening by analysing scientific issues. Practical procedures are evaluated extensively, illustrating capable analysis.

- 121 Achievement is very good because the programme of work is tightly structured to ensure that students build on earlier learning. Year 7 students really enjoyed the challenge of conducting a lively enquiry into micro-organisms as they learned to use a microscope. Year 8 students talked convincingly about the variables affecting the force exerted by the soles of shoes, because the teacher had stimulated their imagination in offering them a wide range of products, from huge soles of *Doc Martin* walking boots to children's delicate dancing shoes. Everyone in a Year 10 class successfully researched at least one chemical element because the teacher had motivated them by comparing chemical classification with different types of music they enjoy. Students with special educational needs make progress in line with their peers. Those who speak English as an additional language similarly make very good progress.
- 122 Teaching and learning are very good. Students think about abstract ideas, drawing on the high quality subject expertise of teachers, when answering difficult questions. Students of all abilities are given good opportunities to improve their use of scientific language. They use and apply mathematics well in most lessons. Planning shows that students develop skills in information and communication technology, but they need more frequent access to computers to analyse and interpret experimental data.
- 123 Teachers match work well to students' needs, enabling most students to reach expected standards or better. At best, teachers vary activities within a lesson to match the different needs of groups closely. Teachers review key aspects of students' learning at the end of the lessons, but sometimes lose the impact of this because they have not left enough time for students to speak about their successes and their difficulties.
- 124 Students have clear guidance about test and examination criteria. Booklets of very good quality show them how each unit of work relates to National Curriculum standards. Students record assessments of their own learning in preparation for setting targets for improvement. This could be refined to ensure teachers are consistent and systematic in setting targets that closely link with National curriculum statements. This would improve the rigour of student self-assessment and ensure maximum progress of each individual, taking the team into excellent practice.
- 125 The leadership of the subject is excellent. A cohesive team reflects the aims of the college in its work to raise standards and do the very best for students of all abilities. Highly committed teachers work hard to fulfil college policies and this is evident in the significant development of student guides for learning. Attention to equal opportunities is very effective. Strategies for motivating girls and boys have been successful in minimising differences in performance. The quality of work provided by technicians is very good, but they are very pressed for time in the light of ever-increasing demands for innovative teaching.

ART AND DESIGN

Overall, the quality of provision in art and design is very good.

Strengths

- Students, including those with learning difficulties, make good progress and achieve well.
- GCSE results are well above the national average and higher than most other subjects in the college.
- Relationships are very good and students work well together.
- The quality of teaching is consistently good, with the needs of each individual given a high priority. Teachers have good subject knowledge and expertise and high expectations.
- Tasks are challenging, stimulating and relevant to a balanced art curriculum.

Areas for improvement

- The use of ongoing assessment at Key Stage 3 and the sharing of assessment criteria with students.
- Accurate use of levels of attainment to assess students' work at the end of Key Stage 3.

- 126 Standards have improved considerably since the previous inspection. By the end of Year 9, the majority of students, both boys and girls, are achieving above the national expectation. By the end of Year 11, overall attainment and GCSE grades are well above the national average. The comprehensive schemes of work and the strong emphasis on a skills based course in Year 7 ensures that all students feel included and confident in the use of a wide range of media and materials. During the Key Stage 3 course, students demonstrate an increasing knowledge and understanding of the many elements within art and how artists use colour and line. For example, in Year 7, students work on line drawings in portraiture, looking at the work of Paul Klee. Students have knowledge of a wide range of artists' work from different periods, including the work of Degas, Picasso and Salvador Dali. They use the works of artists as a stimulus or starting point in much of their work, adding a strong cultural dimension to many projects. In Year 9, for instance, students bring together the many aspects of previous years combining observation drawing and imagination to produce landscapes in the style of Salvador Dali.
- 127 In Years 10 and 11, students build upon the rich experiences gained in their Key Stage 3 course. They are able to sustain themes and develop ideas and many are using colour and line with considerable skill and imagination. They can discuss their paintings with knowledge and confidence and give reasons for visual decisions made and how their work is going to develop. Students produce very competent ideas sheets of small drawings in preparation for final projects.
- 128 Consistently good teaching is having a high impact on students' learning, attitude and achievement, and has improved considerably since the previous inspection. Teachers have very good specialist knowledge and expertise. Lessons are carefully planned and engage and involve students of all abilities, including those with special educational needs. This is achieved by good use of visual support material, discussion, directed questioning and encouragement. This was illustrated by a good discussion relating to the concept of the transition from drawing from observation to a picture in the surrealist style of Salvador Dali. Teaching is conducted with confidence, imagination and sensitivity in a friendly supportive atmosphere. The needs of each individual are given a high priority. Students respond very well and adopt positive attitudes and a willingness to experiment and explore ideas with

increasing confidence and skill. Relationships are very good and there is a good interaction between teachers and students.

- 129 The curriculum is enriched by visits to museums, galleries and exhibitions. The numbers taking a GCSE course are increasing as a result of the good quality Key Stage 3 course. Assessment has improved since the previous inspection. At Key Stage 4, targets are set and progress is carefully monitored. At Key Stage 3, the use of ongoing assessment and the sharing of criteria with students need further attention. The use of National Curriculum levels at the end of Key Stage 3, as a means of assessing the standard of students' work, is not yet secure. The use of computing facilities has improved considerably since the previous inspection and is now identified in the schemes of work as projects, though better access to computers in the art room is still needed.
- 130 The leadership of art and design is effective and supportive. The curriculum leader works with drive and imagination and is well supported by the director of studies for technology. Documentation and schemes of work are detailed and informative. The development plan is realistic and carefully thought through, with priorities identified. The two art staff work very well together and are developing links with the other subjects in the spirit of the new art and design curriculum. The range of displays in and around the art rooms values students' achievements and provides a stimulating visual environment. Good progress has been made since the previous inspection in all areas of weakness identified at that time as needing improvement.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

Overall, the quality of provision in design and technology is very good.

Strengths

- There is a very good range of courses and enrichment opportunities offered to students.
- Standards of work are high and results are well above national averages.
- The relative performance of boys is high; they attain higher results in comparison to many other subjects.
- All students, including those with special educational needs, students with English as an additional language and students with different ethnic heritage, achieve very well and make good progress.
- Students acquire very good manufacturing and engineering skills.
- The quality of teaching is consistently good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge, high expectations of students and maintain excellent pace throughout lessons.

Areas for improvement

- Refinement of the scheme of work for Key Stage 3 to improve students' designing skills as they progress through the key stage.
- The use of day-to-day assessments at Key Stage 3, sharing more specific criteria with students and improving the accuracy of assessments made.
- Greater use of data about students' prior attainment, particularly to identify, plan for and meet the needs of the gifted and talented students.

- 131 The department offers a good range of courses leading to academic and vocational accreditation at the end of Year 11. These include GCSE design and technology examinations in food, graphics products, industrial production, resistant materials and in systems and control, and GNVQ Part 1 engineering. Curriculum enrichment is

provided by a wide range of clubs, cross-curricular activities such as the Trade Fair, links with and work placements in industry.

- 132 Overall, standards are good and have improved since the last inspection. By the end of Year 9, standards reached are above average for both boys and girls. Teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9, although rather generous, indicate a rising trend in attainment over recent years. By the end of Year 11, standards are high. Results for boys and girls at GNVQ and GCSE A* to C grades are well above national averages and have continued to rise. Over the past two years, results in GCSE design and technology food, graphics products and industrial production, and in GNVQ engineering Part 1 courses, have been higher than those attained in resistant materials and in systems and control courses. Boys' performance overall at Key Stage 4 in design and technology is significantly higher than in many other subjects studied in the college.
- 133 Achievement in lessons is good. All students have a good understanding of designing and making processes and can produce good quality products using a range of materials including timber, metal, plastics, food and electronic components. All students make exceptional advances in their knowledge, understanding and use of materials, manufacturing techniques and control systems. For example, after only a few weeks in the department, Year 7 pupils are able to cut, drill, file and polish acrylic confidently and safely to produce refrigerator magnets and steady hand games. They can measure and combine food materials to make scone and cake products, and use computers to control light and time sequences. By Year 9, students are able to use a combination of different materials and electronic components proficiently and apply knowledge of mechanisms and structures to design and make more technically complex products such as executive desk top toys, night lights, pocket torches and moisture sensors.
- 134 The standard of designing skills is variable at Key Stage 3. Students use their own experiences, research from a variety of sources and can generate and communicate design ideas through annotated freehand sketching and formal drawings. However, 3-D modelling and planning skills are less well developed and students make limited progress in their analytical and evaluative skill development over the key stage.
- 135 Standards of work in Year 10 and 11 lessons and design folios are high. Students develop design briefs and specifications, consider increasingly complex design opportunities and constraints and can generate and communicate design ideas effectively. They show an awareness of client and user needs and an understanding of industrial manufacturing methods. GNVQ students can produce detailed production plans, identifying the types, order and description of operations and tool gauges required. The majority of students evaluate their own products against specified design criteria. Year 11 students work with increased maturity and independence. For example, in food technology, students confidently organise their resources and time, understand what they are aiming to achieve, successfully apply their in-depth knowledge and evaluate their work. All students use information communication technology in the control, design and manufacture of products and to improve the quality of their work.
- 136 All students make good progress in lessons. They are well motivated, sustain concentration, work consistently at a good pace and take great pride in producing high quality work. This is because of the consistently good teaching, which has improved since the last inspection.

- 137 Teachers have very good specialist knowledge, high levels of technical competence and an enthusiasm for the subject. They prepare lessons well, making sure they are structured and organised to make good use of time and resources, including technical support staff and learning support assistants. Teachers have high expectations of their students, in terms of codes of conduct, productivity and high standards. This generates very good learning and positive attitudes. Teaching methods, including skilful demonstrations, modelling and clear expectations enable students to acquire and improve their designing and making skills.
- 138 Students are encouraged to give attention to detail, develop and use correct technical language, apply accurate numerical skills and refine their work as it develops. Relationships are very good and all adults and students interact effectively. The high level of individual support given to all students with particular learning needs enables them to achieve well. This applies to the lower attaining students, those with English as an additional language and left-handed students.
- 139 The department does not use prior attainment and assessment records enough to identify, plan for and challenge the most able students. At Key Stage 3, oral assessments help students to refine their graphical, manufacturing and engineering skills during lessons, but the marking and assessments of work at the end of a project are not sufficiently focused or rigorous. They do not help students understand their attainments and progress, which design elements they need to improve and what criteria to use to make these improvements in future work. At Key Stage 4, students are well aware of and effectively use the assessment criteria and guidance to organise, prioritise and refine their coursework.
- 140 The leadership and management of the department are good. The director of studies leads by example and is effective in promoting a culture of high expectation across the department. Teaching staff and technicians meet daily, work well together as a team and have consistent approaches. Informal and formal monitoring of teaching and learning informs a continual improvement process. Funding bids and allocations are appropriately matched to the curriculum provision and to priorities identified within the department development plan. Resources are very well managed, organised and effectively deployed. Risk assessments are established and equipment is well maintained to ensure health and safety requirements are met. Accommodation is efficiently used, is very well maintained and provides a stimulating, positive environment for learning.
- 141 Good progress has been made in addressing the weaknesses identified in the previous inspection and the department has the capacity to sustain these improvements.

GEOGRAPHY

Overall, the quality of provision in geography is good.

Strengths

- A wide-range of learning activities ensures progression in students' knowledge and understanding.
- Good use of fieldwork.
- Involvement of students in discussions.
- Student and tutor guides to supplement the learning process.

Areas for improvement

- Additional tasks to support the raising of the most able students' attainment.
- The frequency of the use of information and communication technology within lessons.
- The dependence on pre-drawn outline maps and diagrams.
- Assessment of students' work and its use in subject target setting.

- 142 Teacher assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 in 2000 show that standards are well above those found nationally, but few students achieve the highest levels. Provisional results for 2001 indicate that standards have been maintained, with some increase in the highest levels. There is no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls. The progress of students with special educational needs is good as a result of the learning support they receive. Students with English as an additional language, too, make good progress by the end of Key Stage 3.
- 143 Results in GCSE examinations in 2000 were well above the levels achieved in all schools nationally, with the provisional results for 2001 showing a further improvement. All students gained an A* to E grade pass. There was no clear difference in the pattern of boys' and girls' grades in 2000, but girls achieved more of the higher grades in 2001. These very good standards are reflected in the attainment of students with specific learning needs and those with English as an additional language. The attainment of both groups of students was good. The very good standard of attainment found at the time of the last inspection has thus been maintained at the end of each key stage.
- 144 By the end of Year 9, all students show good knowledge of contrasting environments and can recognise and describe their natural and human features. Students in Year 7 develop sound skills in the use of atlases and Ordnance Survey maps and by Year 9 most students can use atlases and maps confidently, for instance to collect rainforest data. Standards of presentation are good, with information recorded clearly and accurately on maps and diagrams. However, students are not given enough opportunities to select their own method to display information. A wide range of practical activities and visits supports students' understanding of topics studied in the classroom. Following a visit to a local National Park, students had produced well-illustrated written work that displayed good understanding of its features and the influences on its environment.
- 145 Students are encouraged to use geographical terms accurately and by the end of Year 9 use a wide range of terms accurately in both written work and discussion. This use of spoken and written language effectively supports an improvement in their literacy standards. Teachers make good use of discussion to support understanding. The positive impact this has on learning is evident in the accurate analysis students provide when discussing coastal change. Students with individual learning needs and those with English as an additional language are fully included in all activities

because teachers are aware of their needs. This awareness ensures that they make good progress in discussion work and in the written tasks, helped by the use of some modified worksheets. Very good links with subjects such as science and religious education enable students to bring knowledge from different subjects. They thus reach informed decisions, for example, about the social and moral issues connected with environmental change.

- 146 During Years 10 and 11, all students make good gains in geographical knowledge and develop a fuller understanding of a range of human and natural processes. Carefully structured lesson activities ensure that students are able to collect, discuss and analyse information. This enables them to analyse video evidence about a major volcanic eruption and predict the outcome of the event through discussion, supported by photographs and the use of written information. This style of teaching effectively supports independent learning with planned provision made for students to collect additional information from the Information Centre and the Internet. However, individual students are not often encouraged to provide evidence from their own research in whole-class discussions. Teachers take good account of the needs of students with learning needs so that, with some modification to individual lesson activities, they are fully included in the range of learning activities.
- 147 Most students' work shows evidence of good standards of presentation with maps and diagrams used to support the good standards of written analysis. Limited use is made of database information as a means of developing computer-generated charts for analysis within a lesson. Fieldwork is integrated into learning activities and its use promotes good understanding of topics such as environmental management in a National Park. The department uses the local area well for investigative work. Its use as a part of a well-organised strategy for coursework ensures that students are interested in and prepare well for this important element of their work. As a result, many students produce quality reports, making a positive contribution to the high standards that they achieve at the end of Key Stage 4.
- 148 The subject has benefited from good leadership, which has ensured that learning activities match the needs of the majority of students. The provision of well-planned student and tutor guides aids the learning process and effectively ensures that students in all groups experience the same learning activities. This represents an improvement in what was found at the time of the last inspection, when students were often unaware of lesson objectives. Good teaching is a feature of the majority of lessons, with some very good teaching in lessons where individual students are given the chance of enhancing their learning through carefully targeted tasks. However, many lessons do not provide additional in-class learning activities to raise the attainment of the most able students, which is a cause of the low numbers achieving the highest levels at the end of Year 9.
- 149 The subject makes some use of information and communication technology, with good use made of interactive whiteboard facilities, but the planning for students to use computers to collect and process information within lessons is underdeveloped. Students' work is regularly marked, but comments do not clearly indicate how to reach a higher standard. A wide range of data is available about individual student subject performance, but it is not currently used in a planned, systematic way to set targets linked to raising an individual student's level of attainment. The majority of students enjoy the subject and their positive approach in lessons contributes to the good progress most students make in the subject over time.

HISTORY

Overall, the quality of provision in history is good.

Strengths

- GCSE results are consistently well above the national average.
- Students achieve very well at both key stages in developing a good understanding of key concepts of the past and effective skills of researching and recording evidence.
- Good learning is promoted by good teaching, with well-planned lessons and a variety of stimulating activities.
- The department is well led and considerable improvements have taken place since the last inspection.
- Students are well motivated, enthusiastic about their work and have a very good relationship with the teacher.

Areas for improvement

- More able students are not consistently challenged with rigorous questioning and tasks.
- Assessment results at Key Stage 3 are not sufficiently used to modify curriculum planning and teaching.
- More systematic implementation of the good programme of information and communication technology to enrich lessons.

150 Standards in work seen by the end of Year 9 are above the national average. Students achieve very well in relation to their attainment on entry in Year 7, which was average. Boys perform as well as girls and better than boys nationally. This broadly matches the proportion of students attaining Level 5 and above in teachers' assessments for 2000 and for 2001. Boys and girls also attain equally well at above the national average at the higher grades of Level 6 and above.

151 GCSE results in 2000 were well above the national average at grades A* to C. All students gained at least a G grade, which is above the national average. These high standards have been maintained in 2001, as they have generally been for the last five years. Improvement has been particularly significant since 1999 in the performance of boys. They now do as well as girls and better than boys nationally, especially at the very highest grades. They do better in history than in their other GCSE subjects. Overall, this represents very good achievement for all students compared with their attainment at the end of Year 9. It is largely due to closer monitoring of student's progress, the strong student motivation and successfully building upon the sound skills of enquiry and writing developed by Year 9.

152 By the end of Year 9, students of all abilities have a good knowledge and understanding of key events and chronology. The strong emphasis in the teaching on developing students' literacy promotes good skills of extended writing, criticised in the last report. Students write well in various forms, often with strong empathy, as instanced by the sensitive poems of Year 7 students writing as Saxons on their defeat at Hastings, or the vivid letters home from the trenches in Year 9. Lower attaining students and those with individual needs are helped to write by well-structured guidance, including starter sentences, and resources which match their learning needs. Students who speak English as an additional language are effectively helped by learning assistants and also make good progress. Nearly all students have good skills of enquiry and recording of evidence from different sources. Higher attaining students have very good analytical skills, recognising bias and reliability in interpreting the reasons for Tudor poverty in Year 8 and critically evaluating the Treaty of Versailles in Year 9. Students of all abilities have good skills

of speaking and listening, encouraged by frequent opportunities provided for group and class discussion.

- 153 Standards in work seen at Key Stage 4 are above the national average. Year 11 students are only a little way into their course and, therefore, do not yet match the standards achieved in the previous year's GCSE results. However, they are achieving much as expected. They have a good knowledge and understanding of the key concepts and events under study. All students are developing good skills of selecting and recording evidence. Lower attaining students and those with individual needs are particularly well supported with very well prepared recording sheets and timelines. These resources organise, yet stimulate, students to think for themselves. More able students evaluate sources well and write at length both fluently and analytically, using well chosen quotations, for instance in examining the strengths and weaknesses of the Versailles Treaty.
- 154 Teaching and learning are good at both key stages, and often very good. Generally, students are now set challenging tasks that involve them actively in enquiry work and problem solving. Effective strategies are in place which improve extended writing at Key Stage 3. Students make good progress in most lessons in acquiring secure knowledge and learning important new skills of enquiry, organisation and interpretation of evidence. The well-qualified staff plan lessons carefully, with a variety of challenging activities based on the very thorough schemes of work. Teachers set high expectations and manage time well, especially in setting deadlines for tasks. For instance, Year 10 students studying reasons for the failure of the League of Nations moved eagerly from recording evidence onto a timeline to analysing it in class discussion and in extended writing. The students' enthusiasm for work, seen in nearly all lessons, is encouraged by the teachers' very warm relationship with them and by their good classroom management. A Year 7 class thoroughly enjoyed the fun and challenge of studying chronology by physically sequencing themselves, history books and cards in date order and identifying events from an interactive electronic whiteboard. Students in Years 10 and 11 are aware of their predicted grades, current performance and how to improve. This is due to regular monitoring of work, thorough and helpful marking and checking on coursework.
- 155 Although all the lessons are at least satisfactory, learning is less effective and students' attention falters when there is a slow pace to the lessons or when instructions are not clear. On occasions, the most able students are not being sufficiently challenged by all teachers. Questioning and tasks are not always rigorous enough to make them think analytically and critically.
- 156 The subject is effectively led by an enthusiastic curriculum leader, who is well supported by the director of studies for humanities. There is a very clear educational direction for the subject, with priorities for raising achievement strongly reflecting those of the college. The very good assessment procedures use data well to set individual targets at Key Stage 4, and provide students with helpful advice on how to improve through feedback in student guides. However, results are not yet adequately used at Key Stage 3 to decide how the curriculum or teaching might be changed. A much improved programme of information and communication technology is now integrated into the schemes of work. However, limited access to computer rooms still restricts more systematic use of computers. There is a good programme of outside visits, which stimulates interest in the subject.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Overall, the quality of provision in information and communication technology is very good.

Strengths

- Teachers' knowledge and use of new technology.
- Leadership and management of the subject.
- Achievement in both key stages.
- Cross-curricular provision of information and communication technology.
- Attitudes and behaviour of students.

Areas for improvement

- Use of assessment data to guide planning of work.

- 157 Standards of work at Key Stage 3 are good. Students come into the college from many schools with a wide range of information and communication technology (ICT) skills. By the time they reach the end of Year 9, students' knowledge and understanding are above average. Standards were good at the time of the last inspection and remain so. However, such comparison should take account of the continually developing technology and the increasing complexity of the subject. The majority of students are working at or above what is expected for students of this age.
- 158 Students at the college attain very high standards in both GCSE and GNVQ Part 1 courses. For GCSE in 2000 the number gaining A* to C grades exceeded the national average whilst provisional figures show that, in 2001, results are better still. The performance of students following the GNVQ Part 1 is outstanding in comparison with national averages, showing that completion rates for the college are twice the national average. The trend since the last inspection has shown a steady increase.
- 159 The standard of work seen in Key Stage 3 lessons is good. Year 7 students are at a very early stage in their development and standards are in line with national expectations. Students can log on to the system and manipulate the mouse and keyboard with a degree of accuracy. Their knowledge of the software is basic, although a small number have a greater understanding of the features of *Word*, being quick to follow the instructions given by the teacher. Students in Year 8 have made considerable progress and are now confident and competent users. Their knowledge of input and output devices is good. They access Intranet and Internet sites easily, regarding computers as tools to be used in the course of their learning. Year 9 students make use of a wide range of software in their cinema project. Good examples of use of desk-top publishing, spreadsheets, databases, word processing and the Internet are evident in their folders.
- 160 The good learning that takes place in ICT lessons is further enhanced by the well-developed cross-curricular opportunities in the college. As a matter of course, students use ICT in every subject. The well-planned programmes in all subjects ensure that National Curriculum requirements are met and that students who enter the college at an average level of competence end this stage of their education working at above average levels. The good progress made is the result of specialist teachers having very good subject knowledge, which benefits students directly and supports teachers in other subjects. Since the last inspection the quality of the cross-curricular work and the skills of the teaching staff have been much improved.

- 161 Standards are further improved throughout Years 10 and 11. All students achieve some form of accreditation, most at a level well above national average. Students are discerning users of ICT. They recognise when and where the use of computers is appropriate. They are made aware through good, well-planned lessons that responsibilities come with ICT skills. All students sign up to the 'acceptable use policy' and recognise the seriousness of misuse. They are aware that the college has an effective monitoring system to check for any irresponsible behaviour. Breaches of the policy are extremely rare, which is a testament to the very good attitudes and behaviour that prevails in all lessons. There are occasions when a lack of clarity in outlining the learning objectives means that students do not fully understand the purpose of the work they are set. However, overall teaching within the subject is good. Teachers provide good written and oral feedback in lessons, which helps students to develop their understanding and improve their coursework. The majority of students know the criteria by which their work is to be examined. They are appreciative of the support available from their teachers, who display a high level of commitment.
- 162 The subject is very well managed, including the effective mapping of the cross-curricular work in ICT. The college had made considerable strides in this aspect since the last inspection. The outcome of this has been the continuing increase in standards. Students reach the end of their compulsory schooling very well equipped for the technological world in which they will be working.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Overall, the quality of provision in modern languages is very good.

Strengths

- Teachers are fluent and confident in the languages they teach.
- Lessons are thoroughly planned to ensure the best use of time.
- Teachers manage their classes very well in Key Stage 3.
- Good relationships between students and staff create a good environment for learning.
- Teachers use a variety of resources including information and communication technology to maintain students' interest.

Areas for improvement

- Teachers sometimes miss opportunities for using the languages they are teaching.
- There is not enough challenge for the most able students.
- Some students find it difficult to concentrate during lessons lasting 2 hours.
- Some students forget what they have learnt when there is a week's gap between their lessons.

- 163 The college offers students opportunities to study French, German and Spanish. The picture for languages is one of improvement.
- 164 At the end of Key Stage 3, results have improved steadily over the past few years. In 2001 they were well above average in all three languages. Results in languages at GCSE have dipped in recent years, but improved in 2001. Although they did not compare well with other subjects in the college in 2001, there was considerable improvement in French and German, and results in Spanish were among the college's best.
- 165 In Key Stage 3, students understand what is said in all three languages and speak with good accents, using short phrases or longer sentences according to their stage

of learning. In their first few weeks of French or Spanish, Year 8 students can spell and count in the language and already have a good fund of everyday words and phrases. Students in their third year of German are competent speakers who can talk about their likes and dislikes and describe their school day.

- 166 Throughout Years 7, 8 and 9, writing is the slowest skill to develop. Students are not always able to match their good level of understanding with equally good written accuracy, especially if written work is a difficulty for them in other subjects. In general, students' writing is developing in line with their ability while their understanding is often much better than might be expected.
- 167 In Key Stage 4, students understand what they read or hear without difficulty. They are not all willing to try out their spoken language, though most have good accents and can carry on a straightforward conversation. In both French or German, some students lack basic grammatical knowledge and are below average in this respect. This lack of thorough knowledge is also obvious in the written work of the students, more so in French and German than in Spanish.
- 168 Overall, the teaching of modern foreign languages in the college is good, with some being very good or outstanding. The best teaching occurs in Key Stage 3. Teachers of classes in this key stage are particularly skilled at including those students whose particular needs make learning difficult for them. As a result they achieve very well alongside their peers in all three languages.
- 169 In the best lessons, teachers set a lively pace and work through a variety of tasks, which test all the four skills of reading, writing, listening and speaking. They are firm but good-humoured and give praise and encouragement for all who try hard. A group of Year 7 students who had spent their German lesson learning and trying out new words, playing language games and singing, were disappointed when the time came to move on, and very pleased that the next lesson would be coming soon.
- 170 In the lessons which, though satisfactory, are less successful, teachers do not keep the interest of the class and lessons do not flow smoothly. Some tasks, such as matching up cards and pictures, used for Key Stage 4 classes, would be more suited to younger students and do not help older students to extend their knowledge. There are sometimes long stretches of time during which neither students nor teachers speak in the language being taught. However, relationships are good in all lessons and very good support is given to students with individual needs.
- 171 Students' behaviour reflects their interest in the languages they are studying. Some students find it hard to concentrate for lessons lasting two hours and are further disadvantaged by having long gaps, sometimes of a whole week, between lessons. Added to the fact that they are obliged to study at least one language, these aspects of the college's organisation do not help students for whom languages would not be a first choice.
- 172 The majority of students behave very well. They are cheerful, co-operative, enthusiastic and happy to try out new words and expressions. They achieve a mature combination of friendliness and respect towards their teachers and make lesson times a pleasure. They are equally friendly and respectful towards each other and make no comment if others are slower, or faster, than they are.
- 173 Students who are gifted in languages are provided with extra work, but there is no systematic or rigorous check on whether they are doing it. Too often time is lost when these students have finished a task and do not go on to another while others

are finishing. All written work is carefully marked and students have a clear picture of their strengths and weaknesses and what they should do to succeed. They are made fully aware of the syllabus and deadlines for their GCSE studies and understand National Curriculum targets and levels.

- 174 The director of studies and curriculum leaders provide very good guidance for the department and are particularly effective in the support and induction of newly qualified teachers. The department is extremely well organised and has the advantage of very good accommodation and resources. Information and communication technology is well used in the classroom to extend the students' knowledge and skills. Native speakers of all three languages give extra help to students and assist with the wide-ranging programmes of visits and exchanges, and with the very good co-operative ventures with other departments, such as themed restaurant days or the Year 8 trade fair.
- 175 The curriculum is broader than that of many other schools and colleges in that all students have the opportunity to study two languages, although work-related and rapid beginners' courses are no longer offered in the sixth form.
- 176 Comparison with the previous report is not entirely valid as the courses offered by the college have changed. Standards did fall following the previous inspection, but the department is now well staffed and is establishing strong teaching and a good level of improvement so that it can play its full part in the continuing development of the college.

MUSIC

Overall, the quality of provision in music is outstanding.

Strengths

- The teaching is excellent. Teachers work hard to present music as an exhilarating language and a vibrant way of life for students.
- Students enjoy their work and achieve high standards. They have excellent relationships with each other and their teachers.
- Very high standards are achieved in enrichment activities.
- Leadership of music is both visionary and inspirational, so that the music and the performing arts fulfil an important ambassadorial role within the college and the wider community.
- Information and communication technology is increasingly making a great impact on the quality of all aspects of performing arts at the college.

Area for improvement

- Better provision for the development of higher instrumental skills.

- 177 Music is taught as a separate subject only at Key Stage 3 and thereafter within the context of performing arts as an examination subject. In addition, music is a major component in the whole college's provision for performing arts.
- 178 Standards in performing, composing and improvising at Key Stage 3 are well above average. Considered to be already above average at the time of the previous inspection, they have improved still further since then. Students perform expressively and with very good basic control of instruments and voices. Relatively few, however, of the more musically able students at present play instruments to a more advanced level. At the time of the inspection, only 15 were having extra

instrumental lessons from visiting teachers on a limited range of instruments. The college is aware of the need to make better provision for the teaching and learning of higher instrumental skills.

- 179 By the end of Year 9, students have a very good understanding of the music they hear and perform. Teaching is excellent in most lessons and very good in the rest. The students' success is largely due to the exhilarating teaching and energetic enthusiasm that pervade each lesson. Teachers use their considerable specialist skills imaginatively to inspire students and encourage them to enjoy creating musical performances of the highest quality of which they are capable. All students work with instrumental parts that are adapted to their individual needs so that each student engages in the process actively and enthusiastically. They respond very positively to this approach and are keen to work hard because their practising and performing are treated as an exciting journey of creative discovery. In one Year 9 lesson, for example, a girl sang an African song accompanied by the whole class playing independent instrumental parts in a balanced performance that was harmonically and rhythmically very satisfying in its overall musical expressiveness.
- 180 The teaching of singing is charismatic. Consequently, the quality of singing in lessons is particularly good because students are taught from the outset to enjoy using their voices as one of the main means of musical communication. It was significant in all the lessons and activities observed that boys enjoyed the vocal activities as much as girls and achieved similarly high standards. All lessons include a high degree of practical ensemble work and students develop very good standards of musicianship that enable them to play well together. The music area is very well equipped for this purpose, with both technical resources and a wide variety of instruments, including some exotic percussion. All these resources are kept readily available for all to use, and the hour-long lessons are used well to create mixed and colourful ensembles.
- 181 A significant number of students show musical initiative by performing as soloists or taking charge of rehearsing. It was not uncommon, for example, to find individual students leading the class warm-up sessions. Their behaviour is excellent and they are particularly careful in their use of instruments because of the relative lack of performing space available in the main music room. This room, moreover, is poorly ventilated and gets extremely hot at certain times of the year - an aspect that was noted at the time of the previous inspection and is as yet unresolved.
- 182 Students have excellent relationships with each other and with their teachers. Their collaboration is so good that musical results frequently exceed expectations. This is particularly apparent in the enrichment activities that function each week. The dance band makes a very valuable contribution to the musical development of the relatively few students in the college who currently have extra instrumental lessons. It is effective in bringing together students of all levels of musical ability without audition or selection to play popular and lively music to a good standard. The part-singing of *The Singers* was impressive in its vocal quality and control in the folksong 'Waly Waly'. Several inspectors enjoyed sampling the very high standards of achievement of the youth theatre performing with its uniquely vibrant blend of music, dance and drama. Performances heard by this group were both entertaining and thought-provoking. One sequence, for example, explored what might ensue if music was outlawed and banished from the world!
- 183 The leadership of music is both inspirational and visionary, particularly in its successful integration with dance and drama so that the life of the college and the wider community is enriched with lively performing arts regularly. The services of a

technician contribute greatly to the successful incorporation of information and communication technology in this area of the curriculum. Students benefit from his expertise and many musical presentations are enhanced with additional audio and visual features.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Overall the quality of provision is good.

Strengths

- The range of the curriculum activities has improved since the last inspection.
- Students achieve well and adopt very good attitudes to work.
- Teaching is good overall. Lessons are well structured, with teachers evaluating the progress of students, helping them to build on their performances.
- The taught curriculum is supported by an excellent range of extra-curricular activities and competitive team games.
- The subject is well led and a good range of resources is provided.
- There is a very good equality of opportunity and inclusion of all students in all the activities.

Areas for improvement

- The targets for students that arise from the monitoring of their performance are not sharply enough focused on the skills they need to further their progress from lessons to lesson.
- Marking and presentation of students' theoretical GCSE work are inconsistent and do not sufficiently help to advance students' understanding.

184 The Year 2000 GCSE examination results in physical education were in line with national standards. The standards of work of current students studying GCSE are also at average levels. In lessons seen, students are doing well as a result of effective teaching. The clear lesson structure and well-planned activities clearly help to develop the students' learning. In theory lessons, students are able to develop their findings through question and answer sessions and in discussion. There is a good balance between teacher and student input. Students are able to investigate and add to their understanding, using well-prepared worksheets and their own text books.

185 The attainment of students of all ages in physical education is broadly average. As a result of the wide curriculum they study, students are helped to develop their practical skills well. Good evaluations by teachers as lessons progress help support students' understanding of tactics and rules of the game. In a Year 7 basketball lesson, for instance, the students shared a good knowledge of where the ball should go and how to position themselves on the court to receive and move the ball successfully to a shooting position by the basket. In a Year 10 lesson, good teaching supported the students' practice and development of back-court strokes, smash and chop shots for badminton. Students study dance as part of their performing arts programme of study, incorporating music, dance and drama. In a Year 9 dance lesson, students attained at well above average levels supported by excellent teaching. They significantly improved their range, type and complexity of dance movements, combining advanced acquired dance skills with precision, control, fluency and originality. The complexity and range of movements were very well interpreted. This activity was enriched by a number of students playing untuned percussion instruments to produce African rhythms.

- 186 When teachers do not have sufficient qualifications and experiences to teach elements of the planned work, the college supports them and students by employing qualified instructors. The instructor will take groups of students and will also train the teachers to enable them to obtain a certificate of qualification themselves, thereby enabling them to teach the subject in future. Such a lesson was seen during the period of inspection. A qualified climbing instructor instructed a group of students on how to prepare for climbing when putting on the harness and safety helmet. The lesson provided all students with experience of working in small groups to control the rope while one went up a climbing wall. Students attained above average levels of skill due to the excellent emphasis on safety checks and how to develop climbing skills.
- 187 Teaching is good overall, and students learn well as a result. Lessons are planned with clear objectives arising from good, well-detailed course construction. They proceed at a brisk pace and lesson evaluations provide valuable insights into needs in future planning. Teachers use a good range of methods and explanations to support the students' learning. Teachers use their own skills and understanding of the subject well, presenting activities in interesting and stimulating ways.
- 188 Target setting, based on a careful analysis of students' skills, is not well established. As a result, teachers do not provide students with sufficiently clear guidance on what they need to do to improve their work in physical education. Teachers do not give sufficient guidance to students studying the subject to GCSE level about the quality of presentation of their written work, and marking is not used well to inform what they should do next.
- 189 The attitudes of students to their learning are very good overall. They are always attentive and work with a high degree of enthusiasm and motivation. Relationships are excellent. Students respond very well to their teachers' input, striving hard to do their best. Time is used well in lessons. Students support one another and develop a very good team spirit.
- 190 The leadership of the subject manager and the very good support from senior staff in the college are major factors in the improving quality of teaching in the subject. A good scheme of work effectively guides work in physical education. A good range of resources is available and is well managed. Satisfactory accommodation gives the students a good environment in which to work, though the college has no field of its own to use for a range of team games. It successfully overcomes this problem by taking students to two suitable fields in the near vicinity of the school for relevant field sports. The good sports hall, which doubles as a gymnasium, is just big enough for the present number of students using it. Very good displays guide students in what they will be taught and assessed on. These displays also give them details of the wide range of competitive sports opportunities, which many students are keen to take part in, including fixtures against other schools and colleges. Over the few years the college has been open, a significant number of students have attained high enough levels of attainment to represent their local area, county and country in a wide range of sporting activities. Older students qualify for the *Junior and Senior Community Sports and Leaders Award*. This enables them to put into practice their learnt skills. Here they are able to instruct younger pupils in primary schools, which they do enthusiastically.

PERFORMING ARTS

Overall, the quality of provision in performing arts is very good.

Strengths

- Standards are well above the national average.
- Very good teaching, which stimulates, challenges and excites students.
- A team approach, which helps to synthesise the three arts.
- Very good enrichment activities, which raise students' performance skills.

Areas for improvement

- The level of instrumental skill of students in the music element of the course.

191 The college offers a course in performing arts in Key Stage 4, covering music, dance and drama. Results in GCSE examinations in 2000 were well above the national average, with no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls. Results in 2001 were similar to those in the previous year.

192 Within the music elements of the course, students sing and play with confidence and conviction, though performing elements of the course are limited by the relatively low instrumental skills of many students who follow the course. In the drama components, students confidently present ideas orally and their movement is expressive. Similarly, in the dance elements of the course students reach a high standard as they present an extensive range of dance routines.

193 Throughout the course, teaching is very good. Students are constantly challenged to seek to improve their performance and they respond to this very positively. All lessons are pervaded with a sense of high expectation and the desire to improve. Students thus are inspired to plan and execute quite ambitious work. Teachers work very effectively as a team to synthesise the three arts and students respond by successfully transferring their skills from one discipline to another. Students learn very successfully from one another as they respond very positively to the encouragement to collaborate. Students also show considerable initiative as they respond to challenging tasks.

194 Students are able to enrich their studies by joining with others in performing to a professional standard. Through the college youth theatre they are able, very successfully, to develop a unique blend of music, dance and drama in originally conceived musical theatre activities.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Overall, the quality of provision in religious education is good.

Strengths

- Good teaching.
- The inclusion of all students in discussions about religious and moral issues.
- A well-planned curriculum, linked to co-ordinated student and tutor guides.
- Well-planned learning activities have a clear, inter-linked focus on religious and moral issues.
- Links with other subjects to share the teaching of important topics.

Areas for improvement

- Raising the attainment of the most able students.
- The use of information and communication technology in lessons.
- Assessment of students' work and the use of assessment data.

- 195 The attainment of students at the end of Key Stage 3 is in line with attainment in other college subjects. Attainment overall is above the level achieved by other students following a similar type of syllabus. There is no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls. Students with an individual learning need show good attainment in relation to known levels of ability. Standards have been maintained since the last inspection.
- 196 Students' attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is just above the standards expected for their age group for a non-examination religious education course. Both boys and girls achieve similar standards. Supportive teaching enables students with learning needs to make good progress and their attainment is good in relation to their individual levels of ability. The subject has maintained above average levels of attainment since the time of the last inspection.
- 197 There is not enough support for the most able students in either key stage. Teachers provide few additional learning activities to enable these students to reach the highest levels of which they are capable.
- 198 During Years 7 to 9 a wide range of learning activities enables all students to develop a good understanding and respect for the beliefs of Christianity and other major world religions. Good teaching and carefully structured learning activities promote positive attitudes towards the subject, with most students playing a full part in class discussions. Clear links are established between religious and moral values through the inclusion of topics such as violence and fair trade. This approach is doing much to raise the status of the subject as students are expected to link ideas developed in religious education with work in subjects such as geography. Links with science enable students to consider relationships as part of a jointly taught sex education programme. A well-planned sequence of activities successfully develops students' understanding of each religion studied. Individual students are encouraged to contribute information about their own faith and this positive approach enables all students to respect the beliefs of other students in the group.
- 199 Over time there is clear evidence in students' written work and in classroom displays that students are developing a good understanding of different religions. In a review of their work about Islam, students showed the ability to recall accurately important facts about food laws and the features of a mosque. Good use is made of written information and teacher-led discussion to enable students to recognise and understand the meaning of important elements of Christianity such as The Creation and the Parables. There is good subject support for literacy through an emphasis on pronouncing important religious words accurately and the many opportunities provided to use them in written work. However, teachers do not always, at the start of a lesson, make students clearly aware of the key terms that will be used or refer to the examples displayed in student guides or on wall displays. Students are encouraged to recognise the origins of religious symbols and festivals and this ensures the understanding with their existence and use today. By the end of Year 9, students have been provided with many opportunities to develop their own beliefs and values about both religious and moral issues.
- 200 In Years 10 and 11 students build upon the knowledge and understanding gained during Key Stage 3 work. Well-planned lesson activities provide many opportunities for students to link their religious knowledge and beliefs to a range of questions about life and their own and the others' attitudes to moral questions. A suitable range of resources is available to support individual lessons. Good use is made of structured worksheets to record information and ideas. They are used effectively to overcome

the limitations the single lesson has on the time for both the discussion and recording of ideas. Some use is made of time targets, but these are not used consistently to move all students forward. Good, engaging, teaching supports students in formulating their own views without suggesting there is one right answer. Most students respond positively to these challenging approaches and good teacher guidance encourages a consideration of a range of options before forming a final opinion. This is high profile in discussions within the medical ethics topic about abortion, with students revising their initial opinions following an in-depth class discussion supported by detailed information. Through the range of learning activities, the subject effectively supports students' personal development

- 201 The good teaching of the subject is effective in including students of all abilities in discussion activities. Teachers provide good support for students with learning needs and this enables them to play a full part in lessons and as a result they are able to make good progress over time. This represents an improvement, since it was raised as a concern at the time of the last inspection. Students with English as an additional language are fully involved, partly because teachers encourage them to pronounce and understand the meaning of key religious terms. They achieve good standards.
- 202 Students' work is regularly marked, but comments do not clearly identify how it might be improved so that a higher standard is achieved. Artefacts are used effectively to develop students' understanding of the significance of symbolism, with students handling Sikh artefacts expressing clear interest and being able to link items to the work already undertaken. Currently the range of items is not sufficient to support fully the understanding of all faiths studied. Good use is made of visits, for example to a local monastery, with students given a clear insight into the role of silence within religion. The use of local religious leaders to support lesson activities is not well developed. Limited use is made of information and communication technology to enable students to collect and record information. Good use is made of classroom displays to support students' learning
- 203 Over time the development of the subject has benefited from good subject leadership. The acting subject leader has maintained this situation with strong support from the director of studies.

PART E: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

204 In the inspection, 13 subjects and courses were inspected and are reported on in detail. Work in other subjects and courses was sampled and contributed to the overall picture of teaching and learning in the school.

205 The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2000.

GCE AS-level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics	6	67	63	33	17	1.8	1.6
Biology	1	100	53	0	6	3.0	1.0
Computer Studies	3	67	72	0	13	1.3	1.7

GCE A-level and AVCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics	31	97	89	39	45	6.0	6.0
Chemistry	29	100	89	55	42	7.4	5.9
Physics	23	87	88	30	41	5.4	5.7
Biology	31	97	88	58	34	6.8	5.3
Design and technology	9	100	92	22	29	5.6	5.4
Business studies	28	100	91	32	30	6.0	5.3
ICT	32	100	85	41	23	6.6	4.6
Art	12	100	96	25	45	5.7	6.4
Geography	15	100	92	13	37	5.2	5.7
History	10	90	89	40	34	5.4	5.4
English	16	94	92	38	31	6.0	5.4
French	10	80	91	0	39	2.8	5.7
German	8	88	92	63	41	6.0	5.9

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

MATHEMATICS

Overall, the quality of provision in mathematics is very good.

Strengths

- Results at GCE A-level are consistently close to the national average.
- Results at GCE AS-level in further mathematics are well above that achieved nationally.
- The range of mathematics and further mathematics courses provided for students in the sixth form is good.
- Teaching is consistently good across all sixth form mathematics courses.
- Students are well motivated and work hard.

Areas for improvement

- A broader range of teaching and learning styles would offer increased learning opportunities for students.
- Marking is not as thorough as it could be and, therefore, students are less well informed about their progress and how to improve further.
- The strategies used by teachers to integrate students new to the college more quickly in Year 12 require some improvement.
- The number of students achieving the higher level grades at GCE A-level needs to be increased.

206 This summer the unconfirmed results for GCE A-level indicate that all students achieved a pass grade and a good proportion achieved the higher A and B grades. In 2000, the results achieved by students at GCE A-level were above the national average, though the proportion achieving the higher grades A – B was slightly below that achieved nationally. The performance by male and female students is very similar. The all male entry in 2000 for AS further mathematics achieved results that were well above national averages. In 2000, students taking GCSE courses in the sixth form improved their grades.

207 Students currently studying mathematics in the sixth form are achieving standards that are above average. The standard of coursework produced by students in Year 13 is of high quality. As a result of good teaching, students demonstrate, for example, their growing confidence in searching for the roots of an equation by comparing three methods, undertaking the necessary calculations, displaying their results from which they are able to make judgements about the effectiveness of each method. Year 12 students have made a positive start to their courses and are consolidating and building on their experience gained at GCSE. For example, students were extending their knowledge of the range of measures that can be used for interpreting the central tendency of data. In another Year 12 group, effective teaching enables students to deduce the general approach to finding the equation of a straight line and then apply it successfully to a range of questions. For students new to the college the transition period needs to be as short as possible and this requires teachers to review the teaching and learning strategies they use to integrate students.

208 Teaching in the sixth form is good overall. It is never less than satisfactory and in most lessons it is good or very good. Teachers use their subject knowledge effectively to plan interesting lessons. The combination of challenging questions and

explanations ensures that students are well placed to tackle the tasks set. In a Year 13 group working through the mechanics module, for instance, questioning by their teacher revealed that a number of students needed help with the resolution of forces that act on an object placed on inclined plane. Through discussion and exemplification the teacher was able to establish students' difficulties and deal with them successfully. In a lesson on the application of number, students were equally challenged by the various projects they were undertaking. Good individual support by the teacher enabled students to consolidate their learning and move on with confidence.

- 209 Although students' work is marked and assessed, written comments are often restricted to praise and generalities, which do not provide sufficient guidance to students on what they need to do to improve their mathematics. The various module guides for students are detailed and of enormous benefit to students. The practice of setting targets for improvement established in the lower part of the college should not be lost altogether in the sixth form.
- 210 The enthusiasm shown by teachers for the subject has considerable impact on students and their attitude to learning. Students are attentive, work well together, share ideas and support and help each other. The atmosphere in most lessons reflects the strong positive relationship that has been forged between them and their teacher. The confidence of Year 13 students in response to questions depicts a growing depth of subject knowledge and understanding. Opportunities for more open discussion and student participation in lessons would enhance the current range of teaching and learning styles used.
- 211 Students are very confident in their use of information and communication technology and other resources supporting their growth as independent learners. Their written work is fluent, accurate and carefully presented. In Year 12, students following the AS further mathematics course are able to access the distant learning site established for the course. Without exception, students make thorough use of the college's library and information centre.
- 212 The good teaching and learning that occurs in the sixth form is the result of very good curriculum leadership and supporting departmental policies. All teachers of mathematics are given the opportunity to teach in the sixth form and are experienced assessors of the coursework. Student and tutor guides are very informative. They identify what is to be learnt and the supporting materials required. The cross-referencing to the key skills components of communication as well as the application of number is particularly useful to students. The department undertakes a thorough analysis of students' prior attainment and is, therefore, able to build effectively on this and ensure that students become effective learners.

SCIENCES

- 213 The focus was on biology, chemistry and physics. Science AVCE, science GNVQ and electronics were also sampled. In science AVCE, one lesson with Year 12 students was observed which was very good. Very good teaching enabled students to improve their understanding of what is meant by science. One lesson in science GNVQ with Year 13 students was also observed. Teaching was very good, with a variety of activities supported by clear explanations that led to students improving their ability to do calculations based on chemical equations. One good Year 12 electronics lesson was observed, in which the practical task extended students' abilities beyond those at Key Stage 4.

Chemistry

Overall, the quality of provision in chemistry is very good.

Strengths

- Very good examination results show sustained improvement.
- Good teaching by enthusiastic, knowledgeable and supportive teachers.
- Very good student attitudes to all aspects of their work in the subject.
- Good provision of resources, which are well prepared.

Areas for improvement

- The good practice in the use of assessment and performance data to inform teaching and to monitor progress requires further development.
- Teaching and learning styles should take more account of the need to match tasks more closely to individual needs and to enable students to take even more responsibility for their own learning.

214 At GCE A-level, results have improved each year for the last four years. Results are now well above the national average. For the last three years, all students entered for the examination have achieved pass grades and the proportion achieving high grades has been well above average. Students make better progress than predicted from their GCSE results, with boys and girls performing equally well. The number of students that do not complete the course has been very small.

215 The standards of work achieved by current students are above average. In Year 13, students are achieving well compared to predictions and targets based on their performance at GCSE. The quality of work seen in lessons was good. Students' knowledge of the subject is good and they are able to apply their knowledge to practical activities, which they carry out very effectively. In one lesson, students were confident in explaining the theory of the tests they were doing to identify organic compounds. Students have good recording skills, which they use well in lessons. They write high quality reports about their coursework assignments, showing good initiative, good research and skilful problem solving. The most able students show insight and very good understanding in evaluating the results of their investigations and achieve very high standards.

216 Teaching is good overall. The teachers have very good knowledge of their subject, which they are able to communicate effectively to students. Their confident and enthusiastic approach to lessons produces a very good response from students. Lessons are well planned, calm and orderly, with clear aims and a good range of activities and approaches. Teachers encourage students to take responsibility for their learning, setting tasks that challenge even the most able whilst providing good support for those who need it. In one of the lessons seen, a number of students were finding it difficult to draw a flow chart of chemical reactions for an investigation, but the teacher was able to offer them some alternative strategies, which enabled them to make progress. In another lesson, students were guided to appropriate sources for information about the chemical tests they were doing. In the same lesson, questions and tasks for extension studies were set differently for individual students according to their abilities. Teaching could be improved by developing further the matching of tasks to student needs and by enabling them to take even more responsibility for their own learning.

217 Students come to lessons well prepared, are attentive and keen to learn. They expect to make good use of their time and approach their work with maturity. They

respond well to the very supportive teaching and the good range of resources and activities. They support and help each other, working well as individuals, in small groups, or collectively in whole-class activities. Practical work is carried out with full regard to health and safety issues. They use information and communication technology confidently and appropriately, as well as books and other written materials.

- 218 Students' work is thoroughly marked with helpful written comments for improvement, and is returned promptly to individuals with further discussion and feedback. Teachers make good use of assessment data to monitor the progress of students. Tutorials are provided after lessons for individuals or pairs of students who need additional help. Students are aware of their progress and attainment and many have set their own targets for the end of the course. Some general target setting is done, but this could be extended to produce more specific learning goals for individuals and to inform lesson planning.
- 219 The good teaching and learning are the result of good leadership and management of the subject and a commitment to improving standards. The teachers have prepared detailed schemes of work in the form of tutor guides for the new AS and A2 courses. These provide a good structure and a wide range of learning activities for the courses. Corresponding student guides contain much useful information and ensure that students are well informed about course requirements. These are supplemented by well-prepared learning materials. The subject is generally well resourced, and well supported by technical staff, although only one laboratory has fume cupboards and this produces some limitations on practical work.

Biology

Overall, the quality of provision in biology is very good.

Strengths

- Very good examination results have been sustained over time.
- Student achievement is very good, with some showing extremely high levels of motivation.
- Teaching of very good quality, with high expectations for students' accomplishments.
- Very good management is characterised by continuous review and improvement.

Areas for improvement

- Formalise tutorial work with small groups to further refine student guidance in relation to individual needs.

- 220 Standards are well above average. The proportion achieving the highest grades is almost double the national average because teachers have very high expectations of what students can achieve. Results have improved further in the current year and show consistent improvement over the last four years.
- 221 Students reach very good standards in lessons because teachers communicate excellent subject knowledge with considerable skill, preparing them for examinations with great care. In reviewing earlier achievements, teachers construct a comprehensive knowledge base upon which students are able to formulate good concepts. They make very good connections with other science subjects and apply mathematical skills to biological problems. Coursework shows appropriate use of information and communication technology. Teachers go beyond the requirements of the course, as seen in a Year 13 lesson where students made statistical

predictions for the probable appearance of offspring, based on their earlier knowledge of genetics, and were invited to attend an extension session to be tutored in more complex analysis.

- 222 Achievement is very good. Able students sustain very good progress from GCSE because they are highly motivated. Similarly, lower attaining students rise to the challenge of the group. A boy who followed a course for the less able at GCSE has flourished in Year 13 and stands to gain very good results. Every student wants to complete the course for interest, even though there have been instances where individuals are not finally entered because they cannot meet the required standard.
- 223 Teaching and learning are very good. At its very best, teachers ask probing questions, provoking students into argument and persuading them to offer logical explanations. Teachers work very hard to ensure individual students have understood the work. They continue to question individuals and small groups as they work on tasks and students are very confident to seek clarification and correct errors in their thinking. Assessment of students' work is of very good quality. Year 12 students reported being very well supported by detailed written comments, offering individual guidance of what each needs to do to improve. All students are offered extension sessions, but some do not make best use of the opportunities. They would benefit from more formal tutorials and support from peers in order to refine their abilities and prepare them further for the next career stage.
- 224 The subject is managed very well and the team of teachers continues to aspire to perfection.

Physics

Overall, the quality of provision in physics is very good.

Strengths

- Very good examination results and high standards of achievement.
- Very good teaching, with well-structured lessons and good support for students.
- Positive student attitudes and high expectations.
- Very good resources for learning.

Areas for improvement

- The good practice in the use of information and communication technology to aid learning should be developed further.
- Teaching and learning practice, and in particular the development of learning tasks, needs to be more closely targeted at individual students.

- 225 Results at GCE A-level this summer showed a significant improvement compared with those in 2000. Although results had declined from well above the national average in 1998 to be broadly in line with the national average in 2000, students have, throughout, achieved well compared to their previous performance at GCSE. The results, therefore, reflect variations in the abilities of the different groups of students. The percentage of students achieving grades A to E shows a similar trend, and in 2001 all had achieved a pass grade, with the proportion achieving higher grades well above average. Although the proportion of girls taking the subject has been small, averaging around a fifth of all students studying the course for the last four years, this is similar to the proportion nationally, and they perform equally well compared with the boys. Recently, all students have completed the course.

- 226 The standards of work achieved by current students are above average. Students in Year 13 are achieving well in relation to predictions based on their performance at GCSE. They are very good at discussing and explaining ideas with each other and their teacher, and work very effectively in small groups. Able students are secure in their knowledge and understanding of the subject and can apply this to industrial situations. In one lesson, a Year 13 student was able to relate theory about oscillations to problems with turbine blades he had observed while on work experience. All students achieve well with the support and guidance of their teachers. Practical work is carried out confidently and well, with all students achieving good results. Students keep very good records of their work, which are clearly presented and well organised. They achieve high standards in their coursework assignments, in particular showing very good skills in evaluating their results.
- 227 Teaching is very good overall. Lessons are very well planned and structured, with a variety of tasks including a high proportion of suitable practical activities. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and they use effective demonstrations and examples from everyday experience to explain and illustrate theories. In one lesson, a wide range of pendulums was used to initiate discussion and test students' understanding. In a Year 12 lesson about optics, very good demonstrations at key points in the lesson extended students' knowledge and clarified their understanding. Teachers probe students' knowledge and understanding by very good questioning and well-structured discussions, although sometimes, when discussing with the whole class, they can be quick to accept the first answer, without allowing all students adequate time for thought.
- 228 Teachers explain patiently and effectively and are very positive in supporting all students who experience difficulties. When students are working in small groups they constantly check and monitor their work, offering help when needed. In one lesson, some Year 12 students were struggling to calculate with very small numbers. The teacher explained carefully what to do and how to check if the answer they obtained was reasonable. In two of the lessons seen, some of the groups of students completed practical activities quickly and used the remaining time to write up their results, when they could have been doing further practical work. The lessons would have been better if the original tasks had been modified to match more closely the abilities of the groups of students.
- 229 Teachers make good use of the information and communication technology (ICT) facilities that are available. In one lesson, the interactive whiteboard was used effectively to explain lines of best fit on graphs of the students' results. In another lesson, a computer was used to record and display data as students carried out an experiment on oscillations, so that they could quickly draw conclusions.
- 230 Students respond very positively to their teachers. They arrive promptly at lessons, settle quickly and are keen to make progress, showing interest in the work. They cooperate with the teacher and each other, actively taking part in whole-class discussions and working very well in small groups. They ask for guidance when needed and readily accept advice from their teachers. They use apparatus and resources, including ICT, very effectively. Students take increasing responsibility for their own work as they progress and in Year 13 take the initiative in seeking additional work to improve their learning.
- 231 Work is marked thoroughly, with helpful comments for improvement, and is returned promptly. Extension studies include practice questions that are set regularly. The CD-ROM which accompanies the *Advancing Physics* course is regularly used by

students for practice questions and suggestions for activities. Students are aware of their levels of attainment and overall progress and have set themselves targets for the end of their course. Teachers use marks and test scores to monitor the progress of individual students, but this could be developed further to produce more sharply focused targets for learning.

- 232 The subject is well managed by members of the science team, who work effectively together. Detailed schemes of work in the form of tutor guides for the new AS and A2 courses have been produced, which provide a good framework and stimulating learning activities for the courses. Students are supported by student guides and there is a good range of other learning materials available. Teachers take part in a range of in-service activities, including those arranged for the *Advancing Physics* course, which often take place in the college. The subject is well resourced and well supported by technical staff.

ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

- 233 The focus in this curriculum area was on the design and technology product design GCE AS- and A-level course, but AVCE engineering was also sampled. GCE electronics is also offered by this department and is jointly tutored with science staff. The AVCE engineering results for the past two years are well above national averages and the entry numbers have doubled. A high number of students achieve distinctions and merits and this is an upward trend. Two lessons were observed. In Year 12, effective use was made of the interactive whiteboard to illustrate and explain formula, calculations, reciprocal and the law of negative index. Students were able to undertake several exercises to demonstrate their understanding of indices and numbers in standard form. The good teaching with clearly focused tuition, knowledge explanations and discussions enabled Year 13 students to increase their understanding of the customer needs and product requirements and to enable them to produce a detailed technical specification.

Design and technology: Product design

Overall the quality of provision is good.

Strengths

- Numbers of students are rising, including an increase in the number of girls taking courses.
- Students achieve good standards of work in relation to their prior attainment and experiences.
- Students have a very good understanding of industrial perspectives, the work of commercial designers and of manufacturing methods.
- Students have a good understanding of information and communication technology and confidently use the computer aided design and manufacturing equipment very effectively.
- Teaching is good; teachers have a very good subject knowledge and structure lessons well, with a good range of activities conducted at a brisk pace.
- There are high levels of individual student support and guidance within and beyond lessons.
- The majority of students are sufficiently motivated to go onto design and technology degree courses or into technologically oriented employment.

Areas for improvement

- The proportion of students gaining the higher A and B grades.
- Further refinement of course planning, including a bridging foundation unit on entry at Year 12 and more effective integration of theoretical, designing and practical manufacturing work throughout the AS course.
- The provision of specialist designated accommodation for design activities and provision for design and technology: food AS- and A-level courses in the future.

- 234 Achievement on the courses overall is good when account is taken of the broad range of attainment indicated by the students' entry qualifications. The A-level results up to 2000 show that students achieve above the national average for A to E grades, with all students attaining at least a pass grade. In 1999, a high proportion of students achieved the higher A and B grades. Over time, as entry numbers have significantly increased, the proportion of higher grades has declined. The 2001 results confirm this. The new AS course results for 2001 are good, with over half the students attaining B and C grades. There are no significant differences in attainment between students of different gender or ethnic background.
- 235 In relation to their prior attainment and in comparison to other subjects taken, students achieve good standards in design and technology. This is an improvement since the last inspection. Several students from neighbouring schools, students with relatively low GCSE grades and those that followed different design and technology specifications at Key Stage 4, are accepted onto product design courses, provided they show sufficient interest and commitment.
- 236 Students make good progress in lessons and achieve well. During the early stages of the course, students recognise gaps in their prior experiences and are eager to address shortfalls, such as the lack of designing skills that the former engineering students have and the limited manufacturing skills of the former graphics products students. They work hard and are keen to share their expertise and strengths to support one another. In a Year 12 lesson, for example, students were able to share their varying knowledge of design and manufacturing processes in order to consider client and user needs, analyse existing commercial products and to generate and communicate a variety of design ideas for a futuristic prototype model MP3 player.
- 237 Year 13 students consider increasingly complex design opportunities and constraints and can apply their knowledge and understanding of materials, components, production principles and quality issues, when generating specifications and resolving conflicting product requirements. Students can produce technically accurate working drawings using a range of formal techniques and use production plans to aid manufacture.
- 238 Students have a very good understanding of client needs, the work of commercial designers and of current industrial production methods, including volume, batch, mass, line and continuous production. For example, in the design and production of an educational toy, a student was able to incorporate five different types of mechanisms and to produce a comprehensive production plan identifying the operational and assembly stages of the zig-zag, steps, worm gears, maze and handle movement culminating in the final assembly and finish of the product.
- 239 Students use computer-aided design and manufacturing equipment exceptionally well. For example, they can confidently use *Mechanical and Pro Desk Top* programs for parametric modelling and successfully program and use computer-aided lathes and milling machines. As students progress through the course they produce

products of increasing complexity and quality finish. For example, expandable modular wine racks, designed to budget, constructed in pine, aluminium and plastics were innovative in design, with components produced on computer-aided machines, accurately assembled with excellent quality finish. Good account is taken of forces, structures, product safety regulations and aesthetics.

- 240 Design folios confirm that students make good progress and gains over the course. This is because of the good teaching and the high priority given to supporting individual students within and beyond lessons. Teachers have very good specialist knowledge, high levels of technical competence and an enthusiasm for the subject. They have high expectations, expect students to work hard and monitor shortfalls in learning, taking swift action when required. This has a direct impact on students' work and generates good learning. The rigorous teaching encourages a mature approach to work and the excellent working relationships impact on the positive attitudes.
- 241 Planning takes full account of the new examination specifications and every effort is made to provide real contexts for activities, such as the design and production of a citizenship trophy for the college and drink holder devices for a local transport company. Teaching methods, including skilful demonstrations, knowledgeable explanations, probing questioning and use of the interactive whiteboard help students to learn effectively.
- 242 The good teaching and learning result from work in the department being well led and managed. There is a culture of high expectation and a commitment to development, refinement and improvement. The three teachers contributing to the course each bring different specialisms and talents and they work well together. They organise and manage resources well and seek to extend the range and availability of modern and smart materials in the future. A good range of helpful learning support materials is being developed linking information, learning objectives and assessment criteria to individual project modules. Target setting is becoming established practice, although targets are not yet sufficiently informed by prior attainments.

BUSINESS

- 243 The focus of the inspection of the business studies department was on the courses taught in the sixth form. Students follow one of two courses: a GCE Advanced Level Business Studies course, whose students in the Year 12 are following the GCE Advanced Supplementary (AS) course which leads to the A Level (A2) course in Year 13; an Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education. This course has replaced the advanced GNVQ courses, which were last examined in 2001.

Business Studies

Overall, the quality of education is very good.

Strengths

- Standards are high and well above the national average.
- The teaching is consistently good with some very good teaching.
- Students' work is meticulously assessed so students know their strengths and the areas in which they need to improve.
- There is a strong sense of teamwork in the department and the subject is extremely well led.
- Planning at all levels is excellent.
- Students have positive attitudes to learning and show a strong commitment to the subject.

Areas for improvement

- The length of time of the teachers' introduction to topics against the time in the lesson when students are directly involved in practical work and team work.

244 Standards are high. They were above average at the time of the last inspection and the department has successfully managed to build on this by making improvements, therefore increasing standards even further. The 2000 results showed that students performed significantly better in business studies than in their other A-level subject they took. In 2001, all 26 students passed with either an A, B or C grade. GNVQ advanced courses have also been successful, though the trend over recent years has shown an overall drop in passes of distinction and merit from well above average to standards that more recently are average.

245 The work of the business studies teachers is highly effective because they work closely as a team, plan the courses and lessons together and have a very good solid and secure understanding of their subject. In view of this, their teaching is consistently good and the attention given to marking and assessing students' work is extremely good. Teachers' comments from marking and talking with students is such that they and the students identify successful work, areas for improvement and then they agree ambitious, but achievable, targets. The results indicate that the process is highly successful and that teachers are able to get the very best from their students. Male and female students are equally successful in their courses, as are those from minority ethnic groups. Business studies now attracts nearly four times the number of students that it did at the time of the last inspection.

246 On both advanced courses, students in Year 13 are achieving well in relation to predictions based on their GCSE results. In lessons, students are motivated to do well and work effectively in pairs or larger teams to complete taxing and challenging tasks. Teachers have high expectations and are keen to ensure that their students succeed. For example, students show good understanding in calculating the risk of various business outcomes when assessing the qualities of a number of business options presented to them. One such scenario was about the absence of an owner of a restaurant for a few months and what the owner should do. Business calculations showed that it would be unprofitable to close the restaurant temporarily and that the best financial option would be to employ a friend or relation as a temporary manager of the business, though the students were quick to recognise that such a move brought additional, less quantifiable, risks. These included the potential loss of the restaurant's reputation and the de-motivation of the existing staff

since one or more may have thought they were more experienced and sufficiently competent to keep the business running efficiently. In the advanced vocational courses, students are also presented with interesting tasks, which allow them to use the knowledge and understanding they have gained from their Year 12 studies. The standard of their coursework varies from outstanding to satisfactory. Some students show excellent approaches to research, redrafting and refinement of their work before making intelligent conclusions from their investigation. Year 13 students talk knowledgeably about aspects of their coursework, for example, when discussing the ways in which a company works to either increase or stem the loss of its market share. Their basic knowledge and use of business terminology is also good.

- 247 Students in Year 12 have just started their course. They are keen to learn and take part in different activities, but where the introduction to a lesson is a little long their interest diminishes. However, when given opportunities to research information for themselves or they are involved in small group discussions, they work conscientiously and quickly become involved in the business issues of the topic. For example, students talked over the reasons businesses invest in customer service and customer needs. In this lesson, as with others, good relationships and clear questioning, together with the teacher's strong subject knowledge, helped students draw out ideas about staff knowledge of the products they are selling, that interpersonal skills with customers is of a high quality and the importance of after sales services.
- 248 Students have to complete a substantial amount of written work. The case studies and investigations, such as coursework, are drafted, redrafted and improved. Students receive good feedback from their teachers about their work and have the opportunity to produce high quality pieces of writing based on personal research. Their work shows good use of information and communication technology, both in terms of personal research and also through the use of word-processing, construction of graphs and tables.
- 249 Teachers match work very well to the needs of the students through their questioning and by their use of resources and tasks. Where questioning involves most students they are responsive to one another. For example, in a lesson about job descriptions and specifications, students confidently built on each other's contributions as they outlined the strengths and weaknesses of the ways interviewers should prepare for and conduct interviews. However, sometimes teachers move too quickly from one question to the next issue without making sure that the issue has been understood. Teachers' planning is of a high quality. The day-to-day planning is very good and in nearly every case the purpose of the lesson is made clear to the students. Lessons move forward at a brisk pace and the very good relationships in classes ensure that students are engaged in their work and that learning is secure. Students' attitudes to their work are very good. It is clear from the responses of nearly all students that they enjoy their business studies lessons, especially those who have a much longer experience in the department because they have been studying the subject for just over a year.
- 250 The department is extremely well led. Teachers' commitment to the subject and to students is high and the quality of teamwork is impressive. Both courses have been very well planned and make day-to-day planning easy, which has been a strong contributory factor towards the high consistency of good quality teaching. These features, together with access to good resources and students' commitment to their work, have ensured that results have continued to improve over recent years.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Overall, the quality of provision in information and communication technology is very good.

Strengths

- Good teaching and the quality of the teachers' subject knowledge.
- Students' ability to discuss the ethical and moral issues relating to information and communication technology
- The positive attitude to learning of students.

Areas for improvement

- The use and quantity of information given in lessons.
- The variety of teaching methods.
- The depth of analysis and quality of evaluations produced by students.

- 251 Results in the most recent examinations in information and communication technology (ICT) have shown an improvement on previous years and are well above the national average. At the time of the last inspection, students in the sixth form had not taken the final examination and, therefore, no comparison can be made. Students enter the sixth form courses with an above average ability in ICT and gain results that are well above average. They thus achieve well. Although girls achieve better results than boys, the difference is not significant. There is no significant difference in the attainment of students from different ethnic backgrounds.
- 252 Students currently in Years 12 and 13 are achieving well above average standards in their work. In conversation with students, it is evident that they have a very good grounding in the subject, being able to comment on the merits of the various operating systems. Year 13 students, working on their major project, demonstrated a good working knowledge of Access, being able to identify the most appropriate way in which they would apply the software to meet the needs of the various problems selected. Most are working towards suitable designs, as a result of good working relationships with the end users. They are confident in their ability to find solutions that will meet end user needs, producing final solutions that combine the correct degree of complexity with ease of use to match the knowledge of the final user. Some of the weaker aspects of the work seen centred on students not following the process through in sufficient detail in order to meet the coursework criteria. For example, some students placed insufficient emphasis on testing and analysis. Higher attaining students are able to consider a range of possible solutions before disregarding, with sound reasons, those solutions thought to be least suitable.
- 253 There is an evident enthusiasm for the subject amongst students in both years. The level of maturity that pervades the college develops further in the sixth form. Students are businesslike, not only in appearance but in all aspects of sixth form life. They appreciate the very good levels of equipment available, together with the quality of their surroundings. Whether working individually or in groups, students are always co-operative. There is a readiness to help one another, discuss work and make contributions that benefit the whole class. Most students have computer equipment at home, which enables them to e-mail work home in order to complete assignments. This facility is used effectively by both teachers and students for transfer of work and assessment purposes. For the small number who do not have computers at home, access within the college excellent.

- 254 Overall, teaching in the subject is good. All staff attached to the department have very good subject knowledge, which enables them to use the available technology with considerable effectiveness. Some staff have a background of working with technology in industrial settings. Arrangements for ensuring that staff remain up to date with latest developments in ICT are very good and are linked closely to the college system of performance management. The enthusiasm observed in the students is clearly linked to the enthusiasm teachers have for the subject. Teachers prepare well, making effective use of oral and written assessment to ensure that students know the progress they are making in the lessons. They have high expectations and manage students very well, giving them every opportunity to meet those expectations. Occasionally, the enthusiasm for the subject leads to an over-direction and limited variety in teaching methods, which in turn affects the quality of learning. However, teachers generally use time well, ensuring that student needs are met through individual discussions as appropriate.
- 255 Sixth form students make extensive use of ICT irrespective of whether they are taking separate courses in the subject. ICT use is a natural part of study in the college and with a very good ratio of computers to students, all have easy access regardless of the subject being studied.
- 256 The subject is very well managed. It is supported by experienced, well-qualified and committed staff, who assist one another and the students effectively. The computer network is maintained efficiently and effectively by two well-qualified and competent technicians.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

- 257 No subject in this curriculum area was a focus for this inspection. The school offers an A- and AS-level course in physical education in the sixth form. Work for these courses was sampled and students' standards are broadly average.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

- 258 The focus in this curriculum area was on art and design. Lessons were also sampled in performing arts. Students very successfully study dance at GCE A-level as part of a performing arts programme consisting of music, dance and drama. In a Year 12 dance lesson, well above average attainments were seen, supported by excellent teaching and the excellent attitudes of the students towards their work. They achieved at very high levels, very successfully using their previously learnt skills to successfully develop a range of dance sequences, developing motifs¹⁰ expressing emotions. Progress and self-evaluation by the students were very well aided with the use of questions such as "Why have you decided part of this routine is done facing each other?" Students responded in an excellent manner to this input, ensuring the successful development of their sequences.

Art and design

¹⁰ A distinctive feature or dominant idea in an artistic composition.

Overall, the quality of provision in art and design is very good.

Strengths

- Students make good progress and achieve well.
- A-level results are above the national average and have improved since the previous inspection.
- The quality of teaching is very good, with high quality individual help given to students.
- Students maintain interest and involvement through their AS-level course and the majority convert to A-level study.
- Relationships among students and their interaction with teachers are very good.

Areas for improvement

- To improve the number of students gaining A and B grades.

259 The standard of achievement in art and design has improved since the last inspection and shows a consistent upward trend. The number of students gaining A to E grades is slightly above the national average. The AS- and A-level courses provide very good opportunities for all. Students with lower GCSE grades and students who have not followed a GCSE art course are accepted for sixth form study of art and design provided they show sufficient aptitude and commitment. There are no significant differences in attainment between male and female students.

260 In Year 12, students sustain and develop their skills from their GCSE course and are able to translate these skills in drawing and painting to greater depth. They apply these skills with imagination and a feeling and sensitivity for the media being used. Sketchbooks demonstrate a wealth of research and experimentation that is transferred into final projects. Work in folios in both Years 12 and 13 are of high quality, showing development of ideas and an understanding of design principles. There is a wealth of experimentation and a very good understanding of the principles of composition.

261 Teaching is very good and has improved since the previous inspection. Most teaching is on an individual basis within the small groups. There is a sensitivity to the way individuals work and groups of students visit the local museum of industry for first-hand observation drawing of a wide range of objects. Links with local industry are good and students are encouraged to make full use of exhibitions of local artists' work. Teachers have the necessary expertise and knowledge to teach AS- and A-level courses and they know the strengths and weaknesses of individual students. Progress and achievement are monitored regularly and students know what they need to do to improve.

262 Students respond very positively to the high-quality sensitive help given. They use their time well, showing independence and maturity in their approach. Students remain motivated throughout their course as a direct result of the high-quality teaching. They work well together and benefit from challenging targets and activities, which are very relevant to course requirements.

263 The management of the sixth form course ensures varied teaching styles and guarantees that quality time is spent with individuals to check progress and suggest developments and research needs. This contributes to the very good provision for all.

HUMANITIES

264 The focus in this curriculum area was on geography and history.

Geography

Overall, the quality of provision in geography is good.

Strengths

- Good quality teaching that actively involves students in all parts of the learning process.
- Effective provision for independent learning.
- Good interaction between students and staff.
- High-grade fieldwork provision.

Areas for improvement

- Tasks that are more closely linked to the different ability levels within groups.
- The pace of some lessons.
- Clearly defined expectations that students will bring ideas and information to lessons from prior reading.

265 All Year 13 students gained an A-level pass in 2000, but few students achieved the highest grades. Girls were awarded all the higher grades gained. These results indicate that the subject is in line with standards achieved by all schools nationally. This situation was repeated in 2001, but with an increased proportion of both boys and girls awarded the highest grades.

266 Recently awarded Year 12 AS-level results are good and this has led to the majority of students continuing their studies in Year 13. Advanced level results indicate that the subject is successfully building on the standards achieved by students at the end of Key Stage 4.

267 Students in Year 13 show good levels of knowledge and understanding of the human and physical geography modules studied. In a lesson about the hazards resulting from a volcanic eruption, students showed good knowledge from Key Stage 4 work and were able to use this to explain and start to predict potential outcomes of the event. There is good collaboration between students, which supports learning and understanding, as seen during a task that required groups of students to categorise development indicators before reporting back to the whole class. Good use is made of evidence from a variety of sources and students develop a clear ability to accurately extract information from detailed documents as preparation for trial examination questions. Over time, students' work shows evidence of the development of effective presentation skills and this is making a positive contribution to the high standards a number of students achieve in investigative tasks and coursework. All students make use of the Internet to target precise information to supplement lesson activities and investigations.

268 The quality of teaching is good, with students made aware of the learning activities they will undertake at the start of most lessons. All teachers show good subject knowledge and encourage students to use key terms accurately in discussions and written work. Teachers have good expectations of all students and this, together with the very positive interaction between students and teachers, is doing much to develop interest and enthusiasm for the subject. All students are expected to make informed contributions to discussions, but they are not always given clear guidance about preparatory reading to ensure a high level of informed opinion in a discussion activity. Lessons have a clear structure and most contain a good mixture of information gathering, discussion and written work, as in a lesson about National

Parks. However, in some instances the pace of individual components of lessons is not sufficiently rapid and few time reminders are given. This results in students completing lesson tasks in their own time rather than moving onto extension activities. All students complete the same range of tasks and there is limited provision for the most able students to achieve higher standards within the lesson activities. Their high level of attainment comes from the quality of their coursework research and the final written reports.

- 269 Students show a positive response to the variety of learning activities and this supports the good standards achieved at the end of Year 13. At the start of Year 12, students are given good teacher support so that all gain confidence in working in whole class and small group situations. This fully includes all students in the learning activities. There is very good teacher support for students new to the college. Students are encouraged to take notes, but are not always sufficiently selective in recording information in clear categories. By Year 13, students show good gains in knowledge and the ability to engage in a higher standard of informed discussion than in Year 12. This more mature approach has a positive impact on learning, with good gains in knowledge and understanding. Written standards improve in Year 13 as a result of the planned opportunities to produce in-depth written information as a part of coursework reports.
- 270 The effective lesson activities and the good standards of teaching are the result of very good subject leadership. This has created a very positive environment for students and teachers to work together and for students to attain good standards. The new subject leader has a firm foundation on which to develop the subject further. The range of Year 12 taught units is appropriate, but there is a need to assess the extent to which each develops students' knowledge and understanding in preparation for Year 13 work. Work is regularly marked and there is some good practice in the use of in-depth diagnostic comment, but better use needs to be made of this in all sixth form marking. Resources are appropriate and varied and are integrated into learning activities well. Both teachers and students make good use of the interactive whiteboard. Students have used it to present information to the rest of the group from individual and group research and in doing so have enhanced their own understanding. The well-structured and appropriately resourced curriculum makes an important contribution to the good standards students achieve at the end of Year 13.

History

Overall, the quality of provision in history is very good.

Strengths

- Standards at A-level have improved significantly and are above the national average.
- Students achieve very well and often exceed their targets.
- Good teaching encourages effective learning by promoting enquiry and speaking skills and confidence in students to work effectively by themselves.
- Students are very well motivated and work very well with each other and the teacher.
- Very effective assessment procedures help students to understand how to improve.

Areas for improvement

- Less able students do not attain as well in their coursework in Year 12 as might be expected.

- 271 In the GCE A-level examinations in 2000, the proportion gaining the A and B grades was above the national average and the number of those passing with A to E grades the same as the national average. There has been a marked trend of improvement since 1999, with the 2001 results better than the previous year. All students gained a pass grade in 2001, with the proportion achieving the highest grades well above the national average. Boys did almost as well as girls in 2001 after having done less well in history previously.
- 272 Standards in work seen are also above the national average. In Year 13, students are achieving very well in relation to predictions based on their GCSE results. They have a good understanding of the main concepts of the periods under study. They have developed good skills of note-making and recording of relevant evidence from a number of sources. This has been promoted by the teachers' strong emphasis on enquiry work and their encouragement of students to work constructively on their own. This was seen in a Year 12 lesson, when students worked in groups to prepare presentations on an overview of the Reformation, using a variety of sources. Their skills of organisation and speaking are as expected for students just embarking on the A-level course. Year 13 students have developed confidence and fluency in expressing their views, as when they adopted different roles in a lively discussion to react to Henry VIII's closing of the monasteries.
- 273 More able students have mature skills of analysing and evaluating key issues. They discuss complex ideas with considerable insight and write well-structured, analytical essays with relevant supporting evidence. This has been promoted by the high expectations set by the teachers and their very thorough marking, which gives detailed guidance to students on how to improve. Less able students have also benefited from this help, though they found analysis of sources in their Year 12 coursework difficult.
- 274 Teaching overall is good and occasionally is very good. Consequently, students learn well. Teachers use their very good knowledge of the subject to plan lessons which offer stimulating activities, based on the students' own enquiry. Where teaching is most effective, time is used well in setting deadlines and summing up the outcomes of the lesson at the end. Tasks frequently make challenging demands on students' skills of analysis to stretch their thinking. Year 13 students had to weigh up the effectiveness of Charles 1 of Spain as a monarch by discussing in groups his successes and failures. Their findings were recorded on a well-prepared evaluation grid and then defended in lively class discussion. There were clear gains in their knowledge and understanding, while their speaking and analytical skills were strongly reinforced.
- 275 This good learning is also promoted by the very good relationship with the students, based on the teachers' readiness to give time to monitoring and guiding the students' progress. Consequently, students are very well motivated and work well independently. Their attitude to work is very good and, at times in Year 13, excellent. They use time well and most are productive in their work. The less able in Year 12 were initially daunted by the size of their enquiry task on the Reformation, but finally achieved well with the help of the teacher and colleagues.
- 276 The effective leadership and management of the subject also promote the good teaching and learning. Schemes of work are clear and challenging in their tasks. The wide range of resources available provides the students with much stimulus and support for detailed, private study. The setting of specific targets for students after assessments provides well-focused direction for improvement, to which the students readily respond.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

277 The focus in this curriculum area was on English, French and German. The college also offers AS- and A-level courses in Spanish. At the time of the inspection, German was being studied only by Year 12 students and no students were taking Spanish. Three students were taking French at advanced level and seven at AS-level.

English

Overall, the quality of provision for English in the sixth form is good.

Strengths

- Results are now above the national averages.
- Students achieve very well in lessons.
- Students have very good attitudes to the subject, which help them to make very good progress.
- Discussion work in lessons is often of a high quality.

Areas for improvement

- Students should provide more detail in their written assignments and take greater care with the accuracy of their writing.
- Lessons for Year 12 students should start more promptly and students should be encouraged to show more urgency in their work.

278 Results in the combined A-level examination, English language and literature, are above average and, considering that nearly a third of students entered the sixth form with GCSE grades below C, this represents very good progress. Staying on rates are quite good, with few students leaving the course once they have completed their induction programme.

279 The work of the current Year 13 students is above average. Most students are achieving very well in lessons. They respond well to the demands made of them to make full contributions in class. Most can define and amplify a host of technical terminology and apply their knowledge when analysing the effect of the author's subtle use of language in works such as *The Handmaid's Tale*. One lesson was particularly impressive when two students, using good quality overhead transparencies produced on the word processor, taught others how to remember technical linguistic terms. Well-presented resources, clear exposition and direct questions ensured that the rest of the group were kept on their toes. The teacher only had to intervene on odd occasions when teaching points needed reinforcing.

280 Year 12 students are very new to the course. Already the large group are showing confidence in using a variety of source materials to undertake their own research in the development of the English language and to present their ideas in discussion. They also write creatively and well. Some of their short story introductions were very well written and their evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses shows perception of their own composition and sensitivity to the work of others. All sixth form students have very good attitudes to work and show lively and enquiring minds.

281 The teaching is evenly balanced between good and very good. This represents a significant achievement by the staff, most of whom are new to the college and half

new to the profession. They have quickly established a good rapport with students. They give a firm lead in lessons, but do not dominate, and they expect students to be responsible for their own learning. Many of the lessons involve students in taking over for part of the time with the teaching acting as observer, intervening only when necessary to lift the debate if it drags or to clarify any uncertainties that arise.

- 282 Written essays show that most students organise their ideas well and have a good understanding of what is required of them. Answers to questions are clear, but often lack development and amplification. Teachers' marking is helpful and students now need to act on the advice and provide a little more depth to their answers. On the whole, most students are in line to score good grades at A-level, but should check and eradicate some careless spelling errors such as "sentance" and "grammer".
- 283 The climate for learning in all lessons is very good and there exists a real sense of enjoyment in the subject. Most students in Year 13 express very positive views about the subject and take their work seriously. Some of the Year 12 lessons start slowly and the students now need to show a little more urgency to complement their evident sense of enjoyment.
- 284 The new department has managed to ensure that good teaching and learning have been quickly established. There has been a significant improvement in English in the sixth form since the last inspection where it was judged to be sound overall.

Modern Languages

- 285 Overall, the quality of provision in modern languages is good. Small numbers of students have taken languages in recent years and several have not completed the course. Most of those who have taken A-level examinations in the last 3 years have achieved a range of grades from A to E. In 2001, some students gained grades A or B in both German and French.

Strengths

- Teachers are well qualified in the languages taught and speak them fluently.
- The college provides a very good range of resources for learning, including information technology.

Areas for improvement

- Students do not always have the basic knowledge needed for sixth form study.
- Teachers do not take every opportunity of speaking the language being taught.

French

- 286 Students in Year 12 were at the beginning of their course and some of them were new to the college. There was also one new member of staff teaching the subject. In French, some students at this early stage do not have a secure grasp of basic grammatical structures and are finding it difficult to deal with more advanced topics than the ones they have previously met.
- 287 In the small Year 13 group, students understand spoken French well and communicate readily. There is some variation in the accuracy of what they say, but all can make their meaning and opinions clear. They have a good fund of vocabulary and note down new words as they meet them. In their study of literature, they display a good understanding of shades of meaning and can discuss possible reasons for the author's choice of words or detail. They are able to evaluate

characters as they read. They met with varying success in the AS-level examinations at the end of Year 12, achieving a range of grades.

- 288 Teaching is good. In Year 12, the teachers are aware of the students' difficulties and are working with them to improve basic skills so that they can speak and write the language more accurately. Some of this teaching is of necessity in English, though this reduces the time given to communication in French. In Year 13, teachers use challenging material to test and develop the students' comprehension and speaking skills. Literature is taught in English when a new work is studied. This encourages confidence, but inhibits the students' ability to have a discussion in French. Students in both year groups have every opportunity to use the Internet, to work with native speakers and to refer to a wide range of reference and other materials.
- 289 The director of studies is fully aware of the demands and content of the examination syllabus. Lessons are conscientiously prepared and work is carefully marked. Small groups ensure that teachers can give individual attention to the needs of all students.

German

- 290 In German, students are finding difficulty in adjusting to a new course and a different level of content. They have a good level of comprehension, but some are struggling to produce accurate spoken German as yet. There was not enough written work on which to make a judgement.
- 291 Teaching in German is good. Teachers are presenting the students with challenges in listening and speaking, but are sympathetic to their initial difficulties and very willing to help. Students have the advantage of a wide range of resources, including access to the Internet and the opportunity of working with native speakers. The curriculum leader and other staff know the syllabus well and prepare their lessons with care to ensure that the needs of the students are fully met.