

# INSPECTION REPORT

**UPLANDS COMMUNITY COLLEGE**

WADHURST

LEA area: East Sussex

Unique reference number:114591

Headteacher: Mr D James

Reporting inspector: Mrs S Chamberlain  
7661

Dates of inspection: 7-11 February 2000

Inspection number: 184220

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE COLLEGE

Type of college:	Comprehensive
College category:	Community
Age range of students:	11 to 18
Gender of students:	Mixed
College address:	Wadhurst East Sussex
Postcode:	TN5 6BA
Telephone number:	01892 782135
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Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr K Millar
Date of previous inspection:	27 February 1995

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Susan Chamberlain	Registered inspector	Information and communication technology	What sort of college is it?
		Business education	The college's results and achievements
			How well are students taught?
			How well is the college led and managed?
			What should the college do to improve further?
John Kerr	Lay inspector		Students' attitudes, values and personal development
			How well does the college care for its students?
			How well does the college work in partnership with parents?
			Community links
Martin Ash	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
Jan Boulton	Team inspector	Physical education	
Tom Dodd	Team inspector	Design and technology	
Anthony Hill	Team inspector	Art	
		Special educational needs	
Lynn Jenkins	Team inspector	Religious education	
David Leonard	Team inspector	Science	
Jack Mallinson	Team inspector	History	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to students?
David Morris	Team inspector	Music	
Sheila Nolan	Team inspector	Mathematics	
William Robson	Team inspector	English	
		Equal opportunities	
Barry Smith	Team inspector	Geography	

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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Uplands Community College is a mixed comprehensive school for students in the 11-18 age range, with 1009 on roll, which is above the national average. The college lies at the centre of a rural catchment area some 11 miles in diameter. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals (6.42 per cent) is below the national average. The percentage of students for whom English is an additional language is low when compared nationally. The incidence of students with special educational needs (16.1 per cent) is broadly in line with the national average. The proportion of these who have statements is below the national average. The college is over-subscribed; demand for places is high. Students enter the college with levels of attainment close to the national average.

### **HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS**

Uplands is a very good college with many excellent features. The excellent leadership combined with good teaching, very good attitudes, an excellent standard of care, greatly improved examination results, very good community links and excellent opportunities in terms of after-college activities, when balanced against a broadly average expenditure per pupil, produces a school that gives very good value for money.

#### **What the school does well**

- There are excellent provisions made for the safety and well-being of students; students are well advised of their present performance and how to plan their future.
- There are excellent strategies to monitor and evaluate students' progress.
- The college works very effectively with parents and successfully involves them in their children's learning.
- It provides a very good range of learning opportunities, which include extensive extra-curricular, opportunities after college time (OAST) and a wide and well-organised programme of vocational courses.
- Leadership by the principal, vice-principal and key staff is excellent and is supported by a very good governing body.
- There is effective financial control.
- GCSE results have improved greatly.
- Teaching is of a good standard; in four fifths of lessons seen it was good or better.

#### **What could be improved**

- Time allocation for religious education at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form in order to cover the locally Agreed Syllabus and meet statutory requirements.
- Strategies for ensuring consistency in the teaching of numeracy across the college.
- Strategies for further improving literacy across the college.
- Accommodation in many areas of the college that has an adverse effect on learning and limits students' access to a full technology programme.

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

### **HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION**

The college has made excellent improvement since the previous inspection. There has been a steady rise in examination results, particularly at GCSE, so significant that the college was identified as one of the most improved schools in 1998. The greatest impact for improvement has been a four-year project to encourage effective learning. All sections of the college community have been involved. Among its consequences have been the student planner, a new system that emphasises rewards, greater opportunities after college time, a focus on learning strategies and greater student involvement as in the research group and in paired reading. There has been a much more rigorous approach to assessment; parents are now clear about the progress of their children. The sports centre has improved college facilities and enabled the changes that have brought about new mathematics rooms. Learning support has been re-organised and is now jointly organised by a deputy head and head of learning support. There is improved uptake of Key Stage 4 religious

education and the subject receives more time. However, this is still insufficient. Statutory requirements are not met for design and technology. The accommodation still restricts the daily act of collective worship and inhibits learning in several areas of the college. There has been a new equal opportunities policy and a staff development committee and student council monitor the implementation of college policies. The quality of teaching has improved significantly. There has been excellent improvement and the college is in a strong position to improve further.

## STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 14, 16 and 18 year olds based on average point scores in GCSE and A-level/AS-level examinations.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1997	1998	1999	
Key Stage 3	n/a	B	B	C
GCSE examinations	B	B	B	C
A-levels/AS-levels	C	D	C	

**Key**

well above average    A  
 above average        B  
 average                C  
 below average        D  
 well below average   E

At the end of Key Stage 3, standards are well above average in mathematics, above average in science and average in English when compared with all schools. When compared with similar institutions standards are average in mathematics and science and well below average in English. Many students enter the college with low levels of literacy and do as well as can be expected by the end of Key Stage 3. GCSE results for grades 5+ A\* - C are above average as they are for 5+ A\* - G. and 1+ A\* - G. Results have improved significantly in the last two years. The point score for A level students is average and reflects the large number of students who have taken A level but who entered college with low test results. Information and communication technology (ICT) is making a very positive impact upon standards both across the curriculum and in specific ICT lessons. The work seen was around the national average but ICT was used well.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Students have very good attitudes to college. There is a good work ethic and they enjoy their work.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Students behave well generally; incidences of poor behaviour are rare.
Personal development and relationships	Students' personal development is very good and they have very positive relationships.
Attendance	Attendance is above average.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged 11-14 years	aged 14-16 years	aged over 16 years
Lessons seen overall	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.*

Standards of teaching are good. In 99 per cent of lessons seen teaching was satisfactory or better; in four fifths it was good or better; in one third it was very good or better and in about 6 per cent it was excellent. The amount of unsatisfactory teaching was insignificant. Teachers have very good knowledge of their subjects; in some lessons, in mathematics and geography for example, teachers are able to captivate their students. The college has on its staff a "secondary teacher of the year" and a "technology teacher of the year", both assets to an already well-developed staff.

#### **OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL**

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum is broad and balanced at Key Stage 3. At Key Stage 4 it is very broad but for some students who do not do technology or do very little religious education it is unbalanced. The sixth form has an inclusive and very broad curriculum, adapted skilfully to the whole range of students' needs. All students have equal access to learning opportunities throughout their time in the college. Extra-curricular activities are excellent.
Provision for students with special educational needs	Students receive very good support at both Key Stages 3 and 4. Very efficient management of the Learning Support Department is backed by very good learning support assistants.
Provision for students with English as an additional language	Arrangements for bi-lingual support are very good. Students who have been helped are making good progress in mainstream college.
Provision for students' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	There is very good provision for students' personal, moral, social and cultural development. Provision for spiritual development is satisfactory, but opportunities are missed to extend this.
How well the college cares for its students	There are excellent provisions made for the safety and well-being of students and they are well advised of their present performance and how to plan their future.

The college works very effectively with parents and successfully involves them in their children's learning. It maintains excellent links with the community.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The principal, vice-principal and key staff provide excellent leadership and a very clear direction.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors fulfil their duties very well. They know the strengths and weaknesses of the college.
The college's evaluation of its performance	The college has many excellent strategies to monitor and evaluate its progress and strives to improve further.
The strategic use of resources	There is a good match of staff to the needs of the curriculum. Resources are well used but there is insufficient access to up-to-date computers. Inadequate accommodation in many areas of the college has an adverse effect on standards of attainment. Expenditure is planned thoroughly at all levels and the best value is sought by means of tendering.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They like the way the college is run and the significant improvements, which have resulted in a better work ethic.</li> <li>• The college knows students well and welfare and guidance are good.</li> <li>• The strong links with the community.</li> <li>• The college communicates well with parents.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The accommodation is inadequate for the college's population.</li> </ul>

Inspectors endorse the views of the parents.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

### **HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?**

#### **The school's results and achievements**

1. Students enter the college with levels of attainment close to the national average in Key Stage 2 statutory tests. In English, however, results on entry are below average for East Sussex and all schools.

2. In 1999, students' results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 3, at the age of 14, were well above the national comparison with all schools in science and mathematics and were close to the national average in English. In science and mathematics the percentage of students reaching level 6 was well above average. Above average standards of work were seen in art, geography, history, science, modern foreign languages and music. In mathematics the work seen was well above average. In all other subjects standards were around average. The college is close to the average for similar schools when adjustment is made for the quite low literacy skills students have when they enter in Year 7.

3. Students achieve high standards in public examinations at the age of 16, for grades A\*-C particularly. Over the last three years students have achieved well above average results, with a rising trend of success, at a faster rate than nationally although the changes in average point scores are less impressive. In 1999 there were particular strengths in art and English literature. There were significant rises in English language, mathematics, food and French where the number of students entering are sufficient to make a comparison. Only in physical education were results below the national average but these were greatly improved nevertheless. The number of girls achieving high grades was greater than that of boys, reflecting the national trend. Standards attained, in lessons seen during the inspection, confirmed examination results. Standards of work seen in mathematics, science, history and art were well above average and were above average in music, modern foreign languages, geography, design and technology and English. Attainment in other subjects was average as are results generally, when compared with similar schools.

4. Students' attainment in GCE A level courses is consistently below, but close to, the national average. This reflects the cohorts, which are extremely large, that enter the sixth form; many of the students have struggled and been successful and have gained the necessary entry requirements. Achievement at this level, therefore, is in line with expectations, in the light of prior attainment. Results are very encouraging in A level, AS level and GNVQ courses. Those students who study GNVQ business, leisure and tourism and science gain a range of passes which include distinctions and merits. Module results of those taking advanced level business are very good and predictions for the whole course are high.

5. By the end of Key Stage 3 attainment in English is in line with the national average. Students write neatly in a range of styles but many have difficulty in spelling and punctuation. When given the opportunity, many use standard English fluently. They read with understanding, but more could read widely for pleasure. Students show how they can write letters, newspaper articles and simulated police reports at this level. At Key Stage 4, students are attaining above the national average. Many can speak confidently and fluently. Overall, standards of writing and reading for understanding are good, but many students continue to make basic errors with spelling and punctuation. At this key stage

they can make clear, useful notes during lessons. In Year 13 standards are below average in English expression. Most students structure their essays well. Many struggle to analyse set texts; they provide thoughtful, personal responses to modern texts but have difficulty with the language used by, for example, George Orwell.

6. A "literacy across the curriculum" policy is being developed. There is a clear programme for its development, through initial whole-college in-service training led by the head of English. At present strategies are insufficient to address the low levels of literacy that students enter the college with in Year 7.

7. At Key Stage 3 attainment in mathematics is well above average at both Level 5 and Level 6 plus. Work seen during the inspection was very good and mainly appropriate to the sets with results of higher attainers matching those of the examinations. Attainment in mathematics at Key Stage 4 is well above average. This is confirmed in work seen and lessons observed. Students can use angles and co-ordinates at Key Stage 3, trigonometry and three-dimensional work, depending on ability, at Key Stage 4. In the sixth form students build well on the skills in GCSE. Standards are consistently above average but some students find that they are insecure in basic manipulative algebraic skills and this hampers progress.

8. There is no policy for numeracy across the curriculum nor is there an audit of where it is used. Students make a limited use of their mathematical skills in other curricular areas. A few subjects positively enhance students' numeracy skills. For example the use of spreadsheets and computer generated graphs in ICT and business studies gave students many opportunities to work with number, to appreciate trends on graphs and to use formulae to bring about multiple solutions.

9. Standards in science at Key Stage 3 are above the national average, although some higher attaining students achieve less well than they should because work is presented in a way which does not provide sufficient challenge. Most students are well acquainted with the process of photosynthesis by the end of Key Stage 3. At Key Stage 4 standards are well above the national average and in the sixth form standards are above national averages, except in A level biology where they are in line; in A Level chemistry standards are well above national averages. Students have a good understanding of hydrocarbon molecules at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form have strong opinions about testing drugs on animals.

10. In religious education students achieve standards broadly in line with national expectations at both Key Stages 3 and 4. Non-examination students study two religious education modules at Key Stage 4. However, the time allocation is insufficient to meet the needs of the locally Agreed Syllabus. This is also the case in the sixth form, where students' religious education contact is limited to occasional forum groups and day conferences with spiritual and moral inputs. Students make good progress and are able to contribute well to discussions on, for example, racism.

11. Art students demonstrate well-developed drawing and modelling skills and standards are satisfactory at Key Stage 3 and high at Key Stage 4. In business education students have good keyboard skills and can use spreadsheets effectively; standards are good. In design and technology they have sound practical skills and their final products are well manufactured. Geography students are encouraged to become geographers and develop good enquiry skills, and standards are high but do not compare particularly well with other subjects in the college. In history standards are above national expectations at Key Stage 3 and well above at Key Stage 4; students are empathic in the way they put life

into their explanations of the past. Information and communication technology is used well by students both in ICT lessons and across the curriculum and standards are in line with national expectations across the key stages.

12. In modern foreign languages standards are above national expectations; students are stronger at reading, speaking and listening than they are at writing. Music students demonstrate high standards of performance, but in the sixth form they do not always apply themselves sufficiently to analytical exercises. Students attain around the national average in physical education at Key Stage 3 and just below, but considerably improved, at Key Stage 4. Most students in physical education know how to stretch and warm up effectively.

13. The college has set challenging targets as part of its work ethic initiative. These have been exceeded by good results and have been instrumental in identifying the college as one of the 50 most improved in the country. There is a confidence amongst senior staff and inspectors that levels could rise again this year.

14. Of the six students with English as an additional language, five do not require support; they are using the English language well and are able to socialise successfully. One student receives support as she nears GCSE. Overall they make good progress.

15. Students with special educational needs are provided for well. Work is much more closely matched to their ability than at the time of the previous inspection. Teachers have a clearer knowledge of the students and are more able to set appropriate targets by means of individual education plans. Progress of students is at least good and often is very good.

16. Those who are gifted or talented have ample opportunity to extend their skills, and this is exemplified by achievements that have occurred. In drama students have lunchtime workshops to practise their skills; there is a special sports day and good players are linked to local sports clubs. There are master classes which have close links with companies, such as ICI. Students achieve presentational skills, which are of an exceptionally high standard. Some students are successfully entered early for GCSE modern foreign languages, sometimes as early as Year 7. Geographers achieve success in the Eco initiative. Students gain awards such as "Young Engineer of the Year".

17. Girls outperform boys in most subjects, but departments monitor the performance of boys and girls closely and the gap in attainment is beginning to narrow.

### **Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development**

18. Students are very keen to take part in the full range of college activities. They are very proud of the college and enthusiastic about the range of activities it provides. As they mature they show excellent qualities, such as initiative, and by the time they are in the sixth form they take an active part in running the college.

19. As an outcome of the Work Ethic Programme, which has been in operation for several years, students have a very good attitude to their learning. Students are interested in their work. They have a natural curiosity and they take a lively interest in lessons. Confidence in their own ability is high and they respond to challenges set by their teachers. They are enthusiastic about the extra-curricular activities provided and a majority take part at all key stages. Only in a small minority of lessons at Key Stages 3 and 4 do students lack concentration when not directly supervised or when asked to write independently.

20. Behaviour is good in class and around the college. As students respond quickly to their teachers' instructions, very little time is wasted in bringing a class to order. Students are polite to each other and to adults and are very ready to discuss their work. They are trustworthy and show respect for property, handling equipment carefully and safely in practical work. The incidence of exclusion, including fixed term exclusions, has dropped over the last few years. Last year there were 13 cases involving 8 boys and 1 girl. This compares with 31 cases two years ago. Recently the main reason for permanent exclusion is a breakdown of behaviour over a period of time. There have been two drug cases and one of assault on another student. Cases are well documented and are considered by the behaviour committee of the governing body. The policy for social inclusion is having a beneficial effect.

21. Students are active in the life of the college and are very clear about their loyalties towards it. Increasing numbers are involved in assemblies, charity fund raising and community service. There is a students' bulletin and a college web site and students run many of the house activities as well as an Eco group. They support each other in class, either in groups or in pairs and are sensitive in their evaluation of individual work, for instance, in drama. The 'buddying system', where older students are trained to help Year 7 students to integrate, has a marked benefit and lays the foundation to the success of mixed age activities. Students are well able to plan and organise their work. From Year 7 they learn to use their student planners effectively. Failure to submit work on time is not condoned.

22. Students form constructive relationships with their peers and teachers. There is often humour in the classrooms and the respect they have for their teachers increases as they mature. There is very little oppressive behaviour and students respond well to good role models of staff and peers. In many lessons there are lively discussions, and students are very prepared to listen to other points of view. They discuss topics with a moral or social context with intelligence, having a concern for others.

23. Attendance and punctuality are good. Students clearly enjoy coming to college. Since the previous inspection, stricter procedures are in place to monitor unauthorised absence and these are proving successful.

24. Since the previous inspection much has been done to develop more focused attitudes to learning. This has been very successful, with the result that most students are self-confident and assured.

25. Students with special educational needs and English as an additional language are equally well behaved. Their attitude towards their learning is positive, many working in their own time to improve their standards. The enhancement of their self-esteem and their improved confidence as they grow through the college have a positive impact on their personal development. One student with severe learning difficulties has made very good progress in her personal development as she has experienced social integration with mainstream classes.

## **HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?**

26. Standards of teaching are good. Teaching has improved since the previous inspection and is good and often better in approximately four fifths of lessons. In 99 per cent of lessons teaching was at least satisfactory; in one third it was of a very good standard and in about 6 percent it was excellent. In only one lesson was teaching unsatisfactory. Teachers have very good knowledge of their subjects and in some lessons,

in mathematics and geography for example, teachers are able to captivate the imagination and interest of their students. The college has on its staff a “secondary teacher of the year” and a “technology teacher of the year”, both assets to an already well-developed staff.

27. Teachers have very good knowledge of their subjects at all levels; they understand how students learn; this is particularly so in mathematics, physical education and technology, where some teachers’ expertise has been recognised nationally. The “secondary teacher of the year” and “technology teacher of the year” are both inspirational in the way they convey their considerable knowledge to students. All teachers seen exhibited a competence that instilled confidence and enabled students to develop ideas and increase their understanding.

28. Although basic skills are satisfactorily taught on occasions, more attention needs to be paid to these. The college has set literacy targets, but there is more work to be done in this area particularly with respect to students entering the college with low levels of literacy. Numeracy is not monitored and evaluated across the curriculum in any structured way; this is an area for improvement and will require some staff training to ensure a consistency of approach. Government funding has enabled teachers to learn information and communication technology skills and several teachers have already benefited from the scheme; they are sufficiently competent to use these newly acquired skills and many are able to teach them.

29. Teachers plan well; in mathematics planning is excellent. An extensive range of activities is built into lesson plans and, consequently, students rarely lose interest. High expectations are the norm; teachers expect good behaviour, good relationships and considerable coverage of tasks during lessons. For example, students achieve a great deal in an hour lesson in design and technology. Across the subjects students respond well to the efforts of their teachers and their environment for learning is improved.

30. A wide variety of learning strategies is used to make lessons interesting and to encourage a wish to research a topic further. For example, students’ learning was enhanced when they created exploding volcanoes in geography; they are taught to be geographers not students of geography. Students had to apply themselves intellectually and creatively to this task and sustained concentration well. Teachers use effective questioning techniques; in English, for example, questioning is incisive when discussing Shakespeare's works; in design and technology, teachers have excellent questioning capability and in modern foreign languages they target speaking and listening in the taught language with skill and precision. There is a high level of challenge in art, where students are well-schooled in the concept of perspective, particularly those with a physical handicap, who achieve way beyond expectation. Pace is brisk in most lessons and contributes to interest value. In history, students make good use of information and communication technology in the sixth form to combine paragraphs and create a joint essay. The Internet is widely used to stimulate interest and add an extra dimension to learning, particularly so in religious education.

31. Time is used appropriately and to good effect, although in science some higher attainers at Key Stage 3 are not sufficiently stretched. Sometimes students in English are unclear of what to do next. Teachers enhance their lessons by using a range of resources such as videos, computers, CD ROMs and outside speakers, all of which add extra scope to teaching and learning.

32. There is a good whole-college assessment policy and, generally, departmental procedures are at least satisfactory. The “traffic lights” scheme for monitoring students’

progress is exceptionally effective and teachers use this efficiently. It enables all to know when it is appropriate for a student to be stretched and when it is necessary to consolidate or repeat work. This enables teachers to ensure that students are all benefiting from their teaching and that the quality of learning remains high. However, some students in Key Stage 3 English do not know exactly where they are in terms of achievement and this occurs in Year 11 mathematics too; there is a need to ensure sufficient emphasis is given to National Curriculum levels and predicted GCSE grades where these problems occur.

33. Teachers set regular and helpful homework that extends students' learning and students conscientiously record this in their very well kept planners. Parents keep a watchful eye to ensure their child(ren) keep(s) up.

34. Teachers and classroom support assistants work well together to enable students with special educational needs to access and benefit fully from the National Curriculum. Through link teachers and the Learning Support Department, the students are well known and their targets made clear. Where there is additional classroom support, teaching is very good.

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

35. The college provides a very good curriculum that meets statutory requirements at all key stages, except in the provision of enough time to teach the Agreed Syllabus in religious education adequately at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. Furthermore, about a third of students at Key Stage 4 do not study a technology subject. That said, the curriculum is very broad and imaginative. It is constantly under review and subject to further development. It is flexible enough to be sensitive to the particular needs of students, and it allows them all access to an unusually wide range of subjects.

36. There is excellent consultation at all levels. The college is constantly open to new ideas, and energetic in implementing and evaluating them. These qualities have led to the college twice winning the Schools' Curriculum Award, and receiving a grant from the Department for Education and Employment to extend good practice. Governors are closely involved and well-informed about relevant issues. They have links with all departments, and receive regular briefings from the staff in charge.

37. At Key Stage 3 the college provides all the National Curriculum subjects. Information and communication technology and drama are covered once a fortnight, and dance within PE. From their entry into the college, all students take both French and Spanish, continuing with both subjects in Year 8, and strongly encouraged to do so in Year 9. Those who do not so wish have a choice of extending their experience in sports, key skills, food, dance or music.

38. The Key Stage 4 curriculum has been revised in the last year so, beginning in the current Year 10, all students will now take ten subjects plus two options, providing most with the opportunity to achieve ten certificates in GCSE. The options are designed to allow maximum choice, subject to guidance, and include drama, PE, dance, electronics, resistant materials, graphics and business in GCSE, and GNVQ part 1 courses both in business and in health and social care. At both Key Stages 3 and 4 all students take a course in personal, social and careers education (PSCE). This is well organised and well taught, covering all that is required by way of health and sex education. It ensures students have some grounding in the skills they might need when applying for work and enables them to

practise these through a comprehensive work experience programme. Some GCSE subjects are offered after college, with successful results.

39. The sixth form curriculum provides a very wide range of experience. Most students take three A levels, but some take AS level (in music, art history, psychology, further mathematics, science for public understanding, or general studies) or advanced GNVQ, with opportunities to resit some GCSE courses. These different courses can be combined, or taken consecutively. All students spend a lesson a week on either PE or community service, and most study A/S level general studies and key skills. Those doing intermediate GNVQ spend Friday in the workplace. The work-related curriculum is well organised and successful. It includes work experience in France.

40. Provision of extra-curricular activities is excellent, a tribute to the energy and hard work of teachers. The range within PE is unusually wide, as is music with its choirs, orchestra, string quartet, jazz band, and wind ensembles. Most subjects provide opportunities for visiting places abroad or residential experience. Induction into the sixth form is preceded by camping under canvas, and prior to Year 13, students spend a week at Sussex University preparing for higher education. Many students take part in the OAST programme, while others are involved in drama, Duke of Edinburgh's Award, foreign exchanges, or clubs. Extra buses are arranged for the many students who stay in college after lessons are over.

41. Spiritual development is satisfactory. Opportunities are provided in most subjects. These include the inspiration to be derived from a study of volcanoes in geography and transformations in mathematics, but the study of poetry in English was less fruitful than it might have been. There are opportunities to reflect in assemblies, but students attend only twice a week, so the college is not complying with statutory requirements for collective worship.

42. Moral and social education are both very good. Students are well aware of the difference between right and wrong, an awareness cultivated by everything that goes on in college, during assemblies and lessons, and in the way students are taught to treat other people throughout the day. Debates in history, science, PSCE, and other subjects all support this awareness. Sixth formers are active in this way too, by researching what younger students most need from the college. They discovered that the level of bullying was very low, but a buddying programme would help, so that is what they set up and ran. The college does much to encourage its students to be socially aware and mutually supportive. This also permeates all college activities, from the residential camps and visits through to the college council and the use of group work in lessons.

43. Examples of very good cultural development can be found in many lessons which foster students' own traditions and the richness of other cultures. These include regular theatre visits in English, farm surveys in geography, study of the slave trade and native peoples of America in history, the role of women in different societies studied in RE, and environmental issues in technology. Exchanges with students from Ecuador and Japan further enhance cross-cultural understanding. There are missed opportunities in art, in that multi-ethnic achievements are insufficiently covered.

44. The last inspection found much to praise. High standards have been maintained, and most of the issues mentioned then have since been addressed and improved. Lessons in each subject are now spread more evenly through the week. Requirements for teaching ICT are now met, but there has been insufficient improvement in the arrangements for teaching RE at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form.

45. The senior management realised that the key to success in bringing people and students from surrounding areas was to organise the rural bus service to coincide with the college activities. This has made what is known as the OAST scheme such a success. It provides a wide range of leisure and learning activities out of college hours for students, its feeder schools and the wider community. The scheme is well used by students and by about 150 pupils from the feeder schools. Sixth form students are paid for their help and outside youth workers are also employed for their expertise. The scheme forges primary links, encourages mixed age activities and adult involvement in the college, and involves students and the community in the running of the scheme.

46. Most support work is within the mainstream class and is of a good standard. Where students are withdrawn for additional basic skills work they either do not take a second modern foreign language, or they are taken from a reading lesson for extra support using a useful and effective independent learning programme.

47. Students have equal opportunities to participate in all areas of the curriculum. For example, all boys study dance in physical education, and there are both mixed and single gender groupings in this subject. The English department has deliberately created some all-boy groups in Years 10 and 11 to improve boys' attitude and motivation, and to avoid creating lower sets where boys outnumber girls. Setting in all subjects is sensitively organised to ensure an appropriate mix of boys and girls in classes wherever possible. Transport is available for students from rural areas so that they can participate fully in extra-curricular activities after college. Talented and high attaining students are provided with some appropriate opportunities, such as master classes in science, drama workshops and entry to national competitions in technology. Talented linguists are able to enter GCSE examinations as early as Year 7, if appropriate. Students with physical disabilities are fully involved in all areas of the curriculum.

#### **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?**

48. Teachers, working in class or as tutors, know their students well. Procedures for ensuring students' welfare are excellent. Each student's academic performance and personal development are monitored in detail and there is excellent support and guidance for students at each step as they progress through the college.

49. The tutoring system is very effective. Time is given for tutors to monitor each student's work with sufficient data in subjects to do so. This is particularly well developed in the sixth form. Senior management is very involved with the pastoral systems, students' educational plans are carefully monitored at meetings with tutors, and future support is agreed. Child protection procedures are well structured and good practice, as recommended by the local education authority, is adopted by all staff. These procedures ensure that students at risk are correctly identified, monitored and supported. The college works closely with outside agencies, including the education welfare officer, in the guidance of those with behavioural difficulties, poor attendance or stress.

50. Attendance is very well monitored by tutors who, with senior management, obtain reasons for absence. In most cases, parents provide reasons for absence and support the college in conforming to the home college agreement, to ensure their children attend regularly and are punctual at the start of the day. Registers are called correctly at Key Stages 3 and 4 but some latitude in registration is allowed students in the sixth form, which relies heavily on their sense of responsibility. This is effective. In the event of fire drills, tutors know where their students are. The college uses individual attendance records to

monitor students' progress but little use is made of overall attendance statistics to monitor groups of students.

51. Health and safety checks are made regularly and material aspects of health and safety are included in the curriculum. For example, students are well aware of the need for safety glasses during practical work. However, storage of chemicals and ventilation in the laboratories need to be improved and better risk assessment procedures are required in setting up some PE equipment. There is an excellent programme of personal and social education. From Year 7 the programme encourages students to develop their own independence and self-confidence. This is seen in discussions and role-play in which all are expected to take part. The programme covers sex education, health topics including drugs awareness, and students are introduced to careers education from Year 7.

52. The Work Ethic Project has given rise to new thinking and a number of initiatives, including a new anti-bullying policy, new systems for awards and sanctions, and raised expectations. As a result of the scheme, behaviour has improved and teachers rarely have to spend time bringing a class to order. The behaviour policy and the staff handbook are clear about the expected standards of behaviour. The policy shows intolerance of bullying and other forms of harassment. Students report that the college is extremely successful in monitoring and eliminating oppressive behaviour. Classroom management is generally good. Senior management is aware of any weaknesses and there are strategies in place to help teachers. The impact of this is seen in the respect students have for their teachers and the way they mix freely. The student support system is informed by cause for concern reports. These are also helpful in reducing the risk of disaffection. Parents are involved in this pastoral support programme, which plans intervention to help students to manage their behaviour. There are clear guidelines on exclusion and the college exercises social inclusion wherever possible. Merit awards are valued by students, as are commendation letters home

53. Since the previous inspection the college continues to take excellent care of its students.

54. The college has established very efficient and effective systems to collect Key Stage 2 data and other standardised results about students' attainment on entry to the college and at the end of the key stages. A major strength of the college's assessment procedures is the agreed whole-college approach to the cycle of interim assessments which are clearly related to National Curriculum levels, GCSE grades and examination grades on post-sixteen courses. The college has devised close links between standardised test scores and external examination results so that it very successfully formulates accurate assessments of students' attainment. The results of these assessments are carefully and systematically used to identify underachievement through the college's 'traffic light' system, to monitor students' achievements across the curriculum and to inform target setting. These procedures are very well understood by both students and parents.

55. Assessment is used well to inform curriculum planning. The comprehensive whole-college assessment, recording and reporting policy ensures all statutory requirements are met. It also gives clear guidance to departments on the quality of assessment tasks, on consistent marking for improvement and on recording and reporting students' progress and achievement. Students are regularly involved in their own assessment. There is very good practice at A level in mathematics, where students use a reflective log to help inform their own understanding of their strengths and weaknesses. In physical education, lessons on the analysis strand have been extended after assessments showed this as a weakness. The detailed analysis of examination results in science enabled the department to change

its curriculum to boost the students' performance at Key Stage 3. Following assessments there is very good target setting in history, particularly at Key Stage 4. Lower attaining students benefit from the constructive marking in geography. However, in English at Key Stage 3, students do not have clear targets for improvement related to National Curriculum levels. In religious education there are no clear criteria against which to measure students' progress over time.

56. Procedures for monitoring and supporting students' academic progress are very strong. The setting targets and monitoring performance initiative (STAMP) is recognised and accepted by all staff, students and parents as a major strategy in raising the students' attainment. The key features of STAMP include a regular programme of monitoring interim assessments against minimum expected levels and grades derived from base-line indicators, and the involvement of the students in the tracking and recording of progress across all subject areas. The STAMP tutorial system supports students well through counselling, target setting and reviewing progress. Students are able to chart their progress and identify their own achievement. Following such a review, parents are clearly informed through the students' profiles and planners. In the sixth form, the programme involves students in action planning with their tutors on a four-weekly cycle. The college's imaginatively constructed merit system also supports the students' academic progress. Both boys and girls see the value of academic achievement.

57. To align assessment and recording more closely to National Curriculum levels of attainment was a key issue at the last inspection, as was the need for greater consistency and clarity in reporting achievement to parents. Since then the college has made very good progress in successfully addressing these issues. Reports now clearly indicate the students' attainment not only in National Curriculum levels and examination grades but also relate their achievement to prior attainment. Good marking practice has been shared across all curriculum areas. The college is now in a strong position to consolidate its very good monitoring and support procedures through involving all tutors in the STAMP process.

58. The college offers a high quality of welfare and guidance to students with special educational needs. Their academic and social progress is monitored through the pastoral care system and the Learning Support Department. They take part in all college activities. One student with severe learning difficulties was included in the college's autumn production of *Oliver*.

## **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?**

59. Parents are very satisfied with the way the college is run and the academic standards achieved. There is a very good working partnership with parents to promote learning. They like dealing with well-motivated teachers who know their children's needs and who produce good results. They are right in their concern that the college's accommodation has become increasingly over-crowded.

60. Communications with parents are very good. Telephone contact is well used if quick response is needed. There is regular and open communication between parents and departments, particularly when students are not making satisfactory progress. Regular consultation evenings are well conducted to give parents time to get to know teachers and hear their advice.

61. Parents are very supportive of the college. They help with visits and with charity and other fund-raising events. Each year 20 per cent of parents are chosen at random to complete a college questionnaire. There is always a good response and the answers are

used to formulate college policy. The home college agreement was drawn up with the help of parents. It is included in the students' planners and referred to as needed. The planners are well designed and provide a quick and effective means of communication between parents and teachers.

62. The quality of information provided for parents is very good. The annual reports are well devised and informative, and assessment sheets and profiles are regularly used to inform parents of their children's progress. The college newsletter is interesting and sent to all parents. Letters of commendation are sent home and letters are helpful and personal. The college also issues helpful documentation when students are making choices or sitting examinations. Meetings are arranged for parents at these times on learning partnership topics such as homework.

63. Since the previous inspection, the college continues to maintain very good relations with parents, which have a considerable benefit for students' education and development.

64. The college makes every effort to maintain a working link with parents. One student with unusually severe learning difficulties is taught partly in college and partly at home, using the same learning support assistant assigned to her from the statement of special needs.

#### **HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?**

65. The principal, vice principal and governors and other key staff provide excellent leadership. From the front the principal has led the Work Ethic Project, which not only identifies a very clear direction but is indicative of the very good college ethos. The mission statement 'achieving together' is reflected in 'partners in learning' and opportunities after school time initiatives, which raise the college above the mundane to a realm where community, parents, students and staff work as one to the benefit of all concerned. Excellent relationships, care for the individual and a commitment to providing equality of opportunity for all ensure that college values are a reality. There is an emphasis on consultation and groups like the school council, and support groups, such as Parents' Forum and Parents' Power, ensure all are involved in college improvement. Staff and students are committed to learning and have high expectations; they are backed by a strong and effective governing body that shares this vision.

66. There is a readiness to become involved in local and national initiatives that benefit and improve college standards. For example, the principal contributed to a presentation to government ministers on sixth form funding and this has led to a more efficient and purposeful sixth form curriculum, models of which, designed by the vice principal, have been recognised as models of good practice. The college has piloted a key skills project and was the model for the East Sussex project on improving performance.

67. Since the last inspection the college has been recognised as one of the 50 most improved schools and has gained the Investors in People Award. Amongst the population the college has National Secondary Teacher of the Year, one of the country's Technology Teachers of the Year, East Sussex European Student of the Year and the students who received the national Mountbatten Award for Technology. It has gained the National Eco-College and East Sussex Conservation cup.

68. Development of teaching is taken very seriously and senior management monitors and evaluates teaching rigorously. The senior team keeps detailed records of lesson observations and overviews exercise books on a regular basis. This is very effective and is

contributing to raising standards of both teaching and learning. Useful annual reviews are held in order to check out departmental progress with teaching and learning. Appraisal systems are in place, but less than half the staff have up-to-date appraisals. Members of the senior management team have annual performance management reviews by their link governor.

69. The college community is involved in improvement strategies and has a good capacity to succeed even further. The recognition that the college is one of the 50 most improved schools in the country indicates that it is on the right path. Targets are set at students' level for each subject, at staff level for development and at whole-college level. Appropriate targets are published in the college development plan and are reviewed monthly at a meeting of the effective learning steering group and by the governors both during and at the end of the year. Targets for 5 A\*-C grades at GCSE were reached easily and those published are now probably too low.

70. Governors fulfil their statutory duties effectively. They are involved in strategic planning through their contributions to the college review process. They have a monitoring role, each attached to a specific department and they are involved in college matters through a range of sub-committees; these duties are performed conscientiously and with enthusiasm.

71. Financial management is very good. There is prudent yet imaginative control; the college is careful to use specific grants appropriately. There are many of these grants, some of which the college has had to work hard to obtain. The OAST initiatives, for example, gained a New Opportunities Fund lottery grant of £76,000. The administration manager is effective and able to reconcile any spending. Grants for information and communication technology, key skills, sports developments have been used effectively to raise standards

72. New technology is used well except that registration of students is not yet computerised and staff have the tedious job of totalling and recording everything by hand. In 1999 the college invested £50,000 in information and communication technology from college funds; there was also investment from external LEA funding for the sixth form study area, some funding from the National Grid for Learning and New Opportunities Funding and the East Sussex "laptops for teachers" scheme. All these have contributed to raising standards of teaching and learning.

73. Uplands tries hard to apply the best value principles of its study "Taking Education to the market place - Valuing the Consumer". The college does market research and tendering before spending, to ensure good value for money. It is very aware of comparing itself with other institutions in terms of data and costing. Regular meetings are held with Wealden headteachers and information is shared about, for example, staff structures. The college challenges students to choose appropriate related courses. Consultation is a feature of life at Uplands and no one is excluded from expressing their views. The auditor's report identified a number of minor issues and these have all been addressed.

74. Excellent leadership, good teaching, high standards of behaviour and good attitudes when balanced with a slightly above average expenditure per student result in a college which offers very good value for money.

75. All subject areas have a good, or in most cases a very good match of number and experience of staff to the needs of the curriculum. Teachers are well qualified and deployed and the few instances of non-specialist teaching have no adverse effect on learning. The

college has little difficulty in recruiting good teachers and the turnover, in the last two years, is largely the result of promotion.

76. Non-teaching staff make a recognised and positive contribution to the work of departments and Investors in People status ensures that all staff are equally valued. Overall, there is a good balance of full-time male and female teachers and the previous imbalance in senior and middle management is being corrected.

77. Subject areas have a stable staff with high morale and a good balance between experienced teachers and those new to the profession. Staff appraisal, though a little behind schedule, is effective and, through a choice of full or fast track scheme, everyone is included. As part of the programme there is performance management appraisal of senior management each year.

78. Procedures for appraisal, induction, in-service training and teacher training are well prepared and include good documentation and record keeping. Governors provide good support and expertise in staffing matters and in appointments, and all aspects relating to staff are covered in a comprehensive series of policy documents.

79. Training needs are identified in a number of ways, through management initiatives, linked to college development, through departmental requirements and through the career needs of individual teachers. The majority of requests for training are successful and there are satisfactory arrangements for evaluation and dissemination of useful information.

80. There is an effective induction programme for teachers new to the college, based on the DfEE orders for newly qualified teachers. Mentors are appointed, there is a weekly programme of meetings in the autumn term, covering college and educational themes, and this is augmented by regular observation of teaching. Newly qualified teachers are well supported.

81. The college is actively involved in Initial Teacher Training and departments are happy to accept students from various sources, including the universities of Brighton and Sussex and Kings College, London.

82. Since the last inspection the college has continued to improve the high levels of staffing expertise and strengthen the staff support structures. It is a very positive picture and an area of good practice which is having a beneficial effect on the success of the college.

83. Inadequate accommodation in many areas of the college has an adverse effect on standards of attainment. Many improvements have been made since the previous inspection and these allow the curriculum to be taught effectively in most subjects, but with very significant constraints in some subjects and places around the college. The number of students on roll has increased and the usage and occupancy rate of rooms is over 96 per cent. This means that timetabling has to be ingenious to cope with the pressures on the facilities. Rooms in art, design and technology and information and communication technology are too small, restricting the variety of learning activities. A few teachers in several other departments such as history, physical education, science, modern foreign languages and English have no permanent base. Since they have to teach in a number of different rooms they cannot use the full range of equipment nor arrange appropriate display. For instance, they cannot support the proposed literacy programme by putting key words and phrases on view.

84. Corridors and staircases are narrow and become very congested. External access to two blocks has attempted to reduce this pressure. During the inspection week, however, wet and windy weather meant that staff and students arrived at lessons wet and wind-swept because walkways are not covered and the site is very exposed.

85. The library is small and has open access from both sides. A large number of staff and students walk through the area at change of lessons. The sixth form uses the library throughout the day as a study area. They have good social accommodation in the Youth Centre, but their study facilities are limited and many of them choose to use the library.

86. Physical education is now taught in a new sports centre. The facilities are excellent and make a positive contribution to the students' learning. The fields remain water-logged, and some dance is taught in the hall where staff and students walk through and the kitchens and dining hall are adjacent. These factors are distracting for the teacher and students. The dining space has been doubled, but remains overcrowded.

87. Mathematics has new suited facilities with access to its own computer room and a staff work room. This accommodation has a very good effect on team building and the sharing of resources. The significant improvements made since the previous inspection have enhanced the students' learning in a limited number of subjects but the size of corridors and staircases and the number and size of teaching blocks and mobile classrooms make it difficult for members of the college to move efficiently about the college.

88. The provision of resources for learning is at least adequate in all subject areas and good in many. There are, however, some shortages of equipment noted in design and technology, in particular sewing machines and an embroiderer. Provision and access to IT equipment, while mainly good, are insufficient in science and design and technology. The overall ratio of computers to students (1:7) is unchanged since the last inspection, but this fact conceals the very large investment and upgrading, and therefore substantial improvement, which have taken place in the interim. Similarly very good improvements have taken place in the library where the ratio of books to students has risen from 10:1 in the last report to the current 18:1. Very good use is made of the books and the 15 Internet linked computers now available in the library.

89. The special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO), who is a member of the senior management team, works with the head of the Learning Support Department to deliver an effective service to those students with special needs, including the gifted and talented. The department is effectively led as a valued service to the college which has a clear sense of direction. The tutorial support service is used to support targeting for Level 3 (Code of Practice). Link teachers act as departmental supports for special educational needs students, collating and disseminating information from the Learning Support Department.

90. A comprehensive equal opportunities policy, introduced since the previous inspection, has increased the awareness of all teachers about ways of providing equal opportunities for students. For example, all departments now monitor examination results by gender and consider ways of improving the attainment of boys and girls. The monitoring of teaching by the senior management team includes a focus on the equal questioning of boys and girls.

## **WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?**

91. In order to improve the college, the governors, senior staff and staff of the college need to take the following action:

- (1) set up strategies for teaching numeracy across the college;  
(See paragraphs 8, 115)
- (2) improve strategies for teaching literacy across the college by focussing on the low levels achieved by students on entry to the college and improving the use of technical language wherever it occurs;  
(See paragraphs 6, 104)
- (3) improve time allocation for religious education at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form in order to cover the locally Agreed Syllabus, and meet statutory requirements;  
(See paragraphs 3, 195, 198)
- (4) ensure that all students receive their entitlement in design and technology, so that statutory requirements are met;  
(See paragraphs 142, 147)
- (5) ensure that inadequate accommodation in many areas of the college does not have an adverse effect on learning, by catering better for art and design and technology and seeking ways to improve access to computers particularly in the sixth form.  
(See paragraphs 83, 84, 130, 147)

### **Subsidiary issues**

- Meet statutory requirements with respect to the daily act of collective worship.  
(See paragraph 41)

### **Community Links**

92. The college maintains excellent links with the community. This is a real strength which has immense benefits all round. The sports hall is very well used for adult activities throughout the day and in the evening. The community has almost exclusive use of the lounge and the fitness suite is well used, often in conjunction with students. Adults also join with students in lessons, such as drama, and many of the after-college activities are open to all.

93. There are very good links with feeder schools, not only with the wide use of college facilities, including the sports hall and laboratories, but also in joint planning in the core subjects. Pupils in Year 6 are well prepared for the transition and are welcomed to the college on a number of occasions before they join. In science, for instance, pupils come into the college for lessons, and every Friday evening some hundred and fifty Year 6 pupils take part in the college's opportunities after school time programme. Parents are kept well informed about what the college provides. There is good progression within the college, with good careers advice for those taking GCSE options, and for those entering the sixth form - now three-quarters of Year 11 - and for those going into work or higher education.

94. Students, mainly in the sixth form, give lunches for the elderly, and others introduce them to the Internet. There are excellent links with commerce, which benefit the work experience programme and business studies. One such link has a reciprocal element

whereby a local company, in return for its support, uses the college IT facilities for training. Students are welcomed by employers, many of whom give further assistance with business advice and interview techniques.

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

### Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	174
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	75

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
6	29	45	19	1	0	0

The table gives the percentage of teaching observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons.

### Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	807	200
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	54	2

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	19	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	187	7

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	5

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	15
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	24

### Attendance

Authorised absence	%
School data	6.8
National comparative data	7.9

Unauthorised absence	%
School data	0.4
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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	86	80	166

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	39	65	57
	Girls	67	63	59
	Total	106	128	116
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	64 (67)	78 (80)	70 (71)
	National	63 (65)	62 (60)	55 (57)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	25 (27)	51 (43)	26 (37)
	National	28 (35)	38 (36)	23 (27)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	49	69	69
	Girls	72	66	71
	Total	121	135	140
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	73 (84)	81 (83)	84 (87)
	National	64 (62)	64 (64)	60 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	37 (41)	41 (32)	39 (40)
	National	31 (31)	37 (37)	28 (31)

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

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	70	81	151

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	35	67	68
	Girls	58	79	81
	Total	93	146	149
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	62 (63.6)	97 (98.1)	98 (98)
	National	46.3 (44.6)	90.7 (89.8)	95.7 (95.2)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	42 (41.4)
	National	37.8 (36.8)

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

### Attainment at the end of the sixth form

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
	1999	58	57	115

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	15.7	15.2	15.5 (15)	3.1	2.9	2.9 (2.3)
National	17.7	18.1	17.9 (17.6)	2.7	2.8	2.8 (2.8)

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	67
	National	82.5

### **Ethnic background of pupils**

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	3
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	3
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	1
White	792
Any other minority ethnic group	3

### **Exclusions in the last school year**

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	13	4
Other minority ethnic groups	0	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)	62.8
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16.3

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

#### **Education support staff: Y7 – Y13**

Total number of education support staff	18
Total aggregate hours worked per week	360

#### **Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13**

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	77.1
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#### **Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y13**

Key Stage 3	24
Key Stage 4	20

### **Financial information**

Financial year	'98/99
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	£
Total income	2,426,034
Total expenditure	2,457,260
Expenditure per pupil	2,441
Balance brought forward from previous year	138,849
Balance carried forward to next year	107,623

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1009
Number of questionnaires returned	428

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	48	47	4	1	0
My child is making good progress in school.	48	49	3	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	21	71	4	0	4
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	27	56	12	3	3
The teaching is good.	43	53	2	0	1
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	47	40	9	1	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	68	29	2	0	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	62	35	2	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	48	43	6	1	2
The school is well led and managed.	57	38	2	0	2
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	50	46	2	0	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	68	29	1	0	1

### Other issues raised by parents

Inspectors agree with the very positive views of parents at the parents' meeting about the way the college catered for the individual and enabled each student to reach his/her potential.

## **PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES**

### **ENGLISH**

95. In 1999 students' attainment in National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 3 was in line with the national average but well below average in comparison with similar schools. Results were not as good as those achieved by students in mathematics or science. Students attained similar levels in recent years, although in 1996 they were above the national average. At Key Stage 4, the proportion of students attaining GCSE grades A\*-C in English in 1999 was above the national average. It was in line with the attainment of students in similar schools. Results in 1997 and 1998 were similar. Students' attainment in English was below their attainment in the other core subjects in 1999. The proportion of students attaining grades A\*-C in English literature has noticeably improved in the last two years and results are considerably better than in English. Results in 1999 were well above the national average. Students' attainment in English literature was better than in science but not quite as good as in mathematics. Girls attain considerably higher levels than boys at both key stages. In the sixth form, attainment at the higher grades A-B at GCE A level is below the national average in most years in English literature and English language. However, nearly all students achieve passes.

96. The standard of work seen during the inspection confirms these levels of attainment. Students arrive in college with attainment in English slightly below the national average. They make steady progress so that by the end of Key Stage 3 achievement is in line with the national average. When given the opportunity, many students speak Standard English fluently in Year 9. For example, some expressed clear ideas about the language of unrequited love in *Romeo and Juliet* but others needed a lot of encouragement to contribute to class discussion. Students read with good understanding and refer to the text to back up their views, although many find the language of Shakespeare difficult. More could read widely for pleasure. Most can write letters, newspaper articles and simulated police reports in an appropriate style. However, students are often held back from achieving higher levels by a lack of accuracy with spelling and punctuation. By the end of Key Stage 4 most students have developed a good understanding of the historical background to set texts. They make clear, useful notes during lessons. They are able to analyse themes and the relationships between characters with close reference to the text. Many students express their views clearly and confidently in class discussion. However, spelling and punctuation difficulties persist. Even higher attaining students make basic grammar errors in essays. Their ability to analyse what they read is better than their ability to structure sentences and paragraphs in their own writing. Students in the sixth form achieve in line with expectations at GCE A level, as their overall attainment on entry to the literature and language courses is below average. Spelling and punctuation are, again, often weak, but students structure their arguments clearly in essays. They provide thoughtful, personal responses to modern texts, such as Russell's *Educating Rita*, but struggle to analyse Shakespeare's use of imagery and language in *Richard III*. Students of English language had great difficulty in analysing the language used by George Orwell in an extract from *The Road to Wigan Pier*.

97. Teaching is good at all key stages. It is nearly always at least satisfactory and in about one fifth of lessons it is very good. In the best lessons, teachers provide a variety of suitable activities and resources to challenge and enthuse all students, including those with special educational needs. For example, a Year 10 class was provided with key extracts from Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*, well focussed questions for discussion, and writing frames to help them organise their writing. They all learned more about the plot and central

characters and worked well together in groups. Teachers know the set texts well so that they can ask incisive questions to help deepen students' understanding. They plan well and clearly explain the purpose of the lesson so that students know what they will be learning. Learning support assistants work co-operatively with teachers to ensure that students on the special educational needs register make good progress. Teachers manage most classes well, but some teachers do not insist on students working quietly when they are writing. In these lessons there is too much social chit-chat amongst students and they do not produce their best work. Teachers mark students' books regularly and provide supportive, precise comments to help students improve. However, not all teachers insist on students correcting spelling and punctuation mistakes.

98. The department has maintained students' attainment at similar levels to those at the time of the previous inspection. Attainment in English literature at Key Stage 4 has improved. The introduction of two sets for boys only in Years 10 and 11 has resulted in improved attitudes towards the study of English among many boys. A policy for literacy across the curriculum is being developed but basic spelling and punctuation errors still prevent students from achieving higher levels in English at all key stages. At present, English schemes of work place insufficient emphasis on the development of students' basic literacy skills, especially at Key Stage 3.

99. The head of department reviews standards regularly and has identified relevant priorities for development, including literacy across the curriculum. The department works well as a team, but more formal evaluation and monitoring of teaching would allow teachers to observe and learn from each other. Teachers keep excellent records of students' attainment and keep students informed of their levels of attainment. This record keeping does not yet lead to the provision of precise targets for students, especially at Key Stage 3, so that younger students are seldom clear about ways in which they can reach a higher level.

## Drama

100. Drama is taught to all students at Key Stage 3 and is a popular GCSE option at Key Stage 4. In the sixth form a class of Year 12 students is following a theatre studies course towards GCE A level. In 1999 the proportion of students attaining grades A\*-C at GCSE was well above the national average.

101. Students achieve good standards in lessons at the end of both Key Stages 3 and 4. Year 9 students are able to work together effectively in groups. They devised a realistic series of scenes about events on a make believe island in the Outer Hebrides. Students speak clearly but lack confidence in performance. They speak more confidently in class discussion, when evaluating each other's performances. The best students are able to capture the audience's attention because they can concentrate and use movement effectively. Others participate well in the group presentations but find it difficult to stay in role. In Year 11 most students use movement and mime effectively. In an exploration of the Israel-Palestine conflict they were able to portray both terror and tranquillity through their actions and mime. Year 12 theatre studies students have very good drama skills. In the observed lesson several used freeze frame techniques effectively to represent thoughts and attitudes which other students were able to interpret.

102. Teaching is good at Key Stages 3 and 4 and very good in the sixth form. Teachers have good relationships with students. They ensure that students understand the purpose and aims of the lessons. Sixth form students benefit from the teachers' secure subject

knowledge. Occasionally the control of over enthusiastic classes is weak and leads to lack of pace but class management is good in most lessons.

103. Drama makes a significant contribution to the curriculum. It provides good opportunities for students of all ages to participate in college productions and to make frequent visits to theatres.

#### Literacy across the curriculum

104. A policy for literacy across the curriculum is being introduced as part of the college development plan. Many departments already contribute to students' competence in literacy and standards are sufficiently high to enable students to learn effectively in all subjects. Students are encouraged to contribute to class discussion and they are eager to respond to teachers' questions at Key Stages 3 and 4. In history there is less opportunity for group or class discussion than in most other subjects but students are often asked to present work formally to the whole class. Students are not often asked to read aloud. Most read fluently and accurately, but sometimes without much expression. They cope well with textbooks and worksheets in all subjects. There are ample opportunities for students to write in a range of forms in several subjects. Teachers of design and technology emphasise the importance of key words and of using technical vocabulary correctly. In science, students generally write well in structured sentences but lower attainers have weak spelling and grammar. Several subjects ask students to write imaginatively as well as analytically.

### **MATHEMATICS**

105. On entry to the college attainment in mathematics is broadly average. When compared with national expectations, attainment in the national tests at the end of Key Stage 3 has been above the national average over several years. In 1999, however, attainment at level 5+ of 78 per cent and at level 6+ of 51 per cent is well above the national average. There is a significant increase in the percentage of students gaining level 7 (15 per cent) Teachers' assessments mainly confirm these findings. Results are in line with those in similar schools. Mathematics results compare favourably with those in science and English. The fluctuations observed in the relative performance of boys and girls in previous years are no longer significant. In both 1998 and 1999, there is little difference in the attainment of boys and girls. At Key Stage 3, the college's upward trend in results is faster than that of the national trend. At the end of Key Stage 3, the standards observed in lessons and the work seen are very good and mainly in line with setting. Higher attaining students in Year 9 are competent in finding angles in diagrams involving parallel lines and can give clear reasons for their answers. They are competent in algebraic skills but at times show an insecure understanding of underlying concepts, such as the many coordinate pairs which satisfy straight line relationships. Students of average attainment display confidence in using the language of probability and show an intuitive understanding of equally likely outcomes. They find difficulty, however, in estimating lengths from scale drawings. Good language skills in groups of below average attainment assist their understanding of percentages. They relate their work in mathematics to everyday words meaning one hundred. They find it more difficult to interpret tables and to use scatter diagrams to describe the possible correlation.

106. At the end of Key Stage 4, attainment in mathematics in GCSE in 1999 is well above both the national average and that for similar schools at grades A\*-C. In previous years, results have fluctuated although regularly in line with or above national averages. These annual variations resulted from inconsistencies in the college's assessment of the course work component of the GCSE examination. Both the percentage of the Year 11

cohort entered for GCSE and the percentage obtaining grades A\* - G have been consistently in line with or above national expectations over several years. Girls' results in 1999 are higher than those of boys at grades A\* - C. (Girls 72.5 per cent, boys 54.5 per cent). However, this pattern is not typical of the results in 1997 and 1998. In 1999, girls performed particularly well at both A\* and C grades. These results mostly reflect the candidates' prior attainment. Again, mathematics results compare favourably with those of other curriculum areas such as English and science. Standards of students' work seen at Key Stage 4 reflect that of the GCSE modular test results which are very good so far. Able students can sketch and transform graphs of common functions. They have good algebraic and numerical skills, but still have some difficulty in manipulating formulae. They can apply trigonometrical skills well to two dimensional work. Less strong spatial awareness limits some of their three dimensional work. Average attaining students show good recall of earlier statistical work and are competent in making estimates and approximations. They display some confusion, however, over bearings and applying Pythagoras' theorem to solving problems. Below average attaining students, as well as those with special educational needs, find difficulty in numerical calculations when multiplication and division are needed. Their oral skills, however, are good and with guidance they are able to describe the properties of enlargement.

107. Attainment in mathematics at the end of A level courses is consistently above average when compared with that in most comprehensive schools. Consistently results are good and there are a high percentage of grades A, B and C with a 100 per cent pass rate in most years. There are no significant differences in the attainment of boys and girls. The few students taking AS courses also obtained good results. The results of GCSE examinations in the sixth form show a low percentage of grades A\* -C over several years, partly as a result of poor attendance. The most recent winter series results, however, show all five candidates obtaining grade C, an improvement of at least one grade on their previous results. Students in Year 12 build well on the skills acquired in GCSE; standards in work seen are good. They are good too in work seen at A level. However, candidates working on applications of calculus still find their progress in problem solving hampered by their unsure manipulative algebraic skills. Year 13 students can work systematically towards modelling a practical situation, such as finding the volume of an egg shape. GNVQ students show well presented work and good progression in the application of number. For example, they are able to work out costs with standing charges and to consider comparative tariffs.

108. Teaching is very good and students learn very well in mathematics. Over 50 per cent of lessons are very good or better with a number of excellent lessons spread throughout the key stages. At each key stage, all teachers have very good subject knowledge and most display an infectious enthusiasm for and enjoyment of their mathematics. This drives them to plan thoroughly and reflectively for lessons, taking into account students' common misconceptions and misunderstandings in learning mathematics. In an excellent Key Stage 3 lesson on linear graphs, planning took account of the students' prior learning and found oral, practical, pictorial and written strategies to deepen their conceptual understanding of both the algebraic and graphical representations of co-ordinate pair relationships. The very clear, planned conceptual links resulting from the teacher's own deep understanding enabled GCSE students to achieve rapid and successful learning in another excellent lesson at Key Stage 4 on curve sketching and related transformations. An A level lesson on volumes of revolution was meticulously and imaginatively planned so that the practical activity not only involved the students in progressively modelling the real problem but also revealed their preconceptions and thought patterns in the problem solving process.

109. All teachers have very high expectations of their students. These expectations are based on the whole college's very good systems for assessment of attainment on entry and excellent procedures for monitoring students' progress, to which the mathematics department is wholly committed. Teachers' regular recording of students' work, based on unit assessments and homework, together with their marking for improvement, ensure that both teachers and students share information on progress in mathematics. However, only some teachers in the department have developed manageable strategies for assessing students' learning in the course of a lesson, as in the Year 9 lesson on using the language of probability. Where this does not happen, students' misunderstandings are not always diagnosed quickly enough, as in the case of higher attaining Year 8 students who still had difficulty identifying whole numbers from a set of improper fractions. A level students keep a reflective log which is carefully structured to help them in diagnosing their own strengths and weaknesses so they can set realistic targets to improve their mathematics. The management of students' behaviour is good at all key stages and ensures the co-operation of the students in their lessons so that there is little wasted time. In all but a few lessons the pace is sparkling and the students concentrate well. However, where the pace is slower, as in a Year 7 lesson on perimeter and area, the students become quietly restless and lose the sense of excitement in learning. Work for students is mainly very well matched to their previous learning. Occasionally, however, it is pitched above the students' needs as in the Year 11 lesson on finding the area of a circle. In most mathematics lessons there are systematic and effective strategies to enhance numerical skills but at times there are lost opportunities, as in the lesson where students were allowed to use calculators to multiply and divide whole numbers and decimals by powers of 10.

110. The present very good leadership of the department has contributed greatly to the raising of attainment in mathematics. There is very strong team work with teachers well deployed to maximise their strengths. The new accommodation, with its own information technology suite, now supports successfully the planned use of information and communications technology within the scheme of work, such as the use of omnigraph in the work on curve sketching and the 'Tenners' programme used in a Year 7 lesson. The shared commitment to raise attainment, coupled with the willingness of the department to review and manage its own strengths and weaknesses, accounts for much of its recent success.

111. Since the last inspection, the department has made very good progress and has successfully addressed all the issues raised. Results at each key stage have improved. The GCSE resit results are also now improving. All teachers now prepare well and there is no longer any unsatisfactory teaching. Leadership and communication across the department are very good.

#### Numeracy across the curriculum

112. On entry to the college the students' numeracy skills are broadly average as measured by standardised tests. Within mathematics there are developing strategies to improve students' number work through planned activities in lessons. At Key Stage 3 numerical skills are satisfactory across most groups, with able students displaying competence in all operations. At Key Stage 4, calculators are used sensibly and rarely as students prepare for the non-calculator papers at GCSE. For all but the lowest attainers, students' numerical skills are satisfactory.

113. Students make some use of numeracy in a few subjects apart from mathematics. In art, students can use their spatial skills satisfactorily in work on perspective. Graphs are used in English to illustrate tension in literature. In design and technology, accuracy of

measurement is enhanced through weighing in the disassembly of food products. Data handling skills are well used in geography course work. Students use fractions and percentages to construct and interpret pie charts.

114. Science emphasises numeracy skills in Year 7. Students use line graphs well to explore the relationship between temperature and the rate of sugar dissolving. Students of below average attainment have difficulty, however, in calculating average lengths and in manipulating numbers in speed and pressure calculations. At Key Stage 4 students can manipulate numbers more proficiently in calculations involving wavelengths and speed. High attaining students are able to draw conclusions from experimental results and rates of reactions.

115. The college has not yet developed a policy for numeracy across the curriculum, nor has an audit of numeracy skills taken place across all departments. In order to ensure effective strategies for enhancing numeracy in all departments the college should formulate and implement a whole college numeracy strategy.

## **SCIENCE**

116. In 1999 the results of National Curriculum tests in science at the end of Key Stage 3 were above the national average and in line with the average for schools having a similar intake. Results in science were higher than in English, but the proportion of students reaching higher levels was low in comparison with mathematics. The results have fluctuated over the last four years, but have been consistently above the national average. When students enter the college their attainment is in line with that expected for their age. For example, in Year 7 almost all can describe simple techniques for separating solids from liquids and classify vertebrates according to their characteristics. Students achieve well at Key Stage 3; by the end of the key stage in Year 9, standards are higher than average, reflecting the results of National Curriculum tests. Most can describe photosynthesis in plants, but some lower attaining students are held back because they have insufficient grasp of the meanings of key words. A minority of students at this key stage do not achieve as highly as they should because work is presented in a way which provides insufficient challenge, for example when they are given too much help in drawing up tables for their experimental results.

117. At the end of Key Stage 4 the proportion of students gaining the higher (A\*-C) grades in GCSE examinations in 1999 was well above the national average and above the average relative to similar schools. A particularly good feature of the results was that almost all students were entered for the examination and all gained a grade in the A\*-G range, with very few F and G grades. As at the previous key stage, results were higher than in English, but lower than in mathematics. Students continue to achieve well at Key Stage 4. Standards in Year 11 lessons are well above average for students approaching the end of the key stage, reflecting results in GCSE examinations. For example, the majority has good understanding of the structures of hydrocarbon molecules and how larger ones can be broken down into more useful smaller ones. Although standards are high enough overall, lower attaining students are held back because their limited understanding of the technical language of science inhibits recall of earlier work.

118. In the sixth form, A level results in 1999 were well above national averages in chemistry and physics; all students entered gained a pass, and a high proportion gained A or B grades. Biology results were above average for the proportion of students gaining A to E grades, but below average for those gaining A or B grades. Some students taking biology have a more limited background in other science subjects and this inhibits their

performance. Results of A level examinations in previous years show a similar pattern. Students do well in the advanced GNVQ; the proportions gaining the full qualification and those graded at merit or distinction are consistently high and this was again the case in 1999. Results in human biology and science for public understanding (both at A/S level) were good. Standards in lessons and the work seen during the inspection are generally higher than average for the course and reflect examination and GNVQ results. In science for public understanding, students demonstrate good understanding of the impact of science on society when they write about the ethics of testing drugs on animals, while in advanced GNVQ they make good vocational links when they research science-related jobs in a well known pharmaceutical company.

119. Students demonstrate good skills in handling laboratory apparatus carefully and safely because they frequently carry out practical work. Their investigative skills are also well developed because they are encouraged to make predictions about experimental outcomes and consider the reliability of their results from an early stage in Year 7. They are good at taking part in discussions, and often eagerly respond to teachers' questions. Their writing skills are variable; high attaining students often write very well, but others make too many grammatical errors. Teachers, in their marking, stress correct spelling of technical words but there is no strategy for developing students' understanding of their meaning. Similarly, students cope adequately with the numerical demands of the subject, for example making good use of graphs to show numerical relationships in their results in Year 7, but there is no strategy for systematically developing numerical skills.

120. Since the previous inspection standards have improved at all three stages.

121. Students with special educational needs make good progress overall; at Key Stage 3 they often make very good progress because learning support assistants have good understanding of their needs, as in Year 9 when the support assistant explained to students how a diagram showed the movement of the Earth and moon in relation to one another.

122. Teaching is good and sometimes better in more than three-quarters of lessons and satisfactory in all the rest. In over a quarter of lessons teaching is very good, and occasionally excellent. Teachers make very good use of their subject knowledge in questioning effectively. In Year 9 the teacher demonstrated the idea of wave movement using a 'slinky' spring, then used questioning to develop students' understanding of how sound waves move through air, while in Year 13 the teacher moved between individual students to check their understanding of theoretical aspects of a practical investigation. Relationships between students and their teachers are very good; as a result students behave well and lesson time is fully used for productive learning. Teachers usually have high expectations of what can be achieved in lessons, and students respond by working at a good pace. In Year 11, students improved their practical skills and understanding of how large molecules can be broken down when they carried out an experiment that required very careful handling of equipment. Although teaching is good overall at all three stages, it is rather less good at Key Stage 3 because in a small number of lessons presentation of the work does not match students' needs. For example, in Year 9, students copied information from a worksheet with little understanding of its content. Marking is up to date. Teachers' comments are detailed but do not always set targets for students to improve. Long-term assessment (based on test results) is very well used to show students how well they are progressing and to set targets for performance in examinations. Since the last inspection teaching has further improved, particularly the proportion of very good lessons.

123. The department is very well led in an atmosphere of supportive teamwork. Teachers and laboratory technicians are committed to further raising standards. Strategies are quickly put in place to address issues arising from careful analysis of examination results, for example the relatively low proportion of students reaching higher levels in the National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 3. However, there is insufficient formal monitoring of teaching and learning at department level, resulting in some inconsistency between key stages and across the department. Lunchtime science sessions for Year 6 pupils have built good relationships with local primary schools and have a positive effect on their skills in handling equipment when they enter Year 7. The curriculum offers students a wide range of opportunities; at Key Stage 3 they extend their learning through extra-curricular science clubs, while in the sixth form the advanced GNVQ and science for public understanding courses are well organised and cater successfully for students who do not wish to follow traditional A level routes to higher education. Although the appearance of the laboratories is greatly enhanced by good displays of students' work, several are in urgent need of refurbishment. The college is aware of a number of health and safety matters that require attention.

## **ART**

124. Students arrive at the college with varying levels of attainment and a varied experience of art and craft. Overall, their standard of attainment on entry is in line with national expectations for their age, with a significant proportion demonstrating a level of skill and understanding above expectation.

125. The proportion of students gaining grades A\*-C in GCSE examinations in 1999 was well above national averages and higher than all other subjects in the college. Results have been well above average over the past three years and have risen steadily over that time. Boys' results have risen more rapidly than girls', with a dramatic rise in 1999. This has narrowed the gap between girls and boys to 5 per cent. The numbers of students taking A and AS level are too small to make fair national comparisons. However, results have risen steadily over the past three years and the numbers entering are rising.

126. In lessons and work seen, the attainment of students at the end of Key Stage 3 is above national expectations. Through the key stage they have gained a good understanding of the basic processes of art and design and explored a good range of artists and art movements. Sketchbooks show that they have begun to annotate their work carefully, researching and writing in a more focused and clear way. Higher attaining students are able to observe and accurately record the foreshortening in their observational studies. In discussion, the students use appropriate specialist terms such as "slip", "coil" and "slab" and demonstrate their practical use in the ceramics lessons. Higher attainers use their imagination effectively to interpret their designs as clay forms. They use applied, pierced and scratch techniques to develop and decorate them. Lower attainers lack patience, tending to rush their work and lose control of the clay form. The very good behaviour and positive attitude towards a subject they clearly enjoy enable students to settle readily and produce good work. The youngest students behave in an exemplary and respectful way when they enter a church to sketch the interior structure.

127. By the end of Key Stage 4 the attainment of students is generally well above national expectations. Students put a lot of creative and intellectual effort into the development of their examination course work. The best sketchbooks reveal a depth and range of research which can only come from experienced, knowledgeable and capable teaching. Students demonstrate well developed painting, drawing and modelling skills, but are also very imaginative in their handling of different media. They work to a high standard

of finish on their ceramic studies, using on-glaze and under-glaze colours and sometimes unglazed scratch and oxide techniques. Those students who display a natural talent for art set themselves more challenging tasks, such as the observational drawing of a complete crab from different perspectives. Their shared commitment and enthusiasm for art, along with the mature and independent approach to learning they show in lessons, are important factors in their striving for high standards.

128. In the sixth form the students are independent learners, able to pursue their own investigation and research, encouraged by well informed teaching. They work on large scale canvasses, which they prepare themselves, experimenting with monochrome and polychrome portrait studies. Their individual cultural studies are of a very high standard, requiring them to research reference books, museums, art galleries and the Internet. They speak with unusual confidence and clarity about their work and are able to work in a wide range of media, using the influence of many artists and art movements, to complete their compositions. They work confidently with clay, designing and making a maquette before working on the final piece. They work in a wide range of media, including mod-roc, papier-mache, batik, direct print and photography to develop their ideas. Higher attaining students use computer software to explore and manipulate digital art images. The stimulating environment is rich in the language and imagery of art, with sustained tutorial and group discussion on the work they are producing. Observational studies, which have been a focal area through the college, now reflect the high standards of work expected by teachers. Using paint, pastel and pencil, the students produce thoughtful, competent studies of natural forms.

129. The quality of teaching is very good and on occasion it is excellent. The excellent knowledge and understanding which teachers have of their specialist areas are important factors in the very good and confident teaching seen during the inspection. Their collective subject knowledge enables students to work in a wide range of media and to undertake a high level of research for their personal studies. Although the accommodation is sometimes cramped, classroom management is very good and teachers are able to focus on individuals and groups, knowing that others will carry on with their work, with very little disruption. Students are encouraged to take responsibility for their own work from the time they enter the college. By the time they reach the sixth form they are fully independent learners, with very few students becoming anxious or losing confidence as the examinations approach. Although lessons are paced well and little time is wasted, the opportunity to bring students together to critically discuss their work is not always taken. Where demonstrations are used to clarify the aims of the lesson and set standards, they are very effective. Students with special educational needs are well known to the teachers and, where necessary, they provide appropriately for them, always remaining positive and supportive of their work. The high expectations of good behaviour ensure that these students are always accepted and supported by others.

130. The recently appointed head of department has a clear sense of direction and is well supported by his experienced team. There is an excellent working ethos in the department, which enables students to develop their own interests in an informed and creative way. The curriculum is very broad and well balanced, with a good range of learning opportunities available to students. The prominence given to observational studies from Year 7 onwards is a crucial pillar in supporting the whole curriculum, although the planning for visits to strengthen the curriculum is weak at Key Stage 3. There is a very good provision for the cultural development of students, which takes in a wide range of cultures over time. As yet the department has not provided effectively for the awareness and understanding of our own multi-cultural, multi-ethnic society. The accommodation remains unsatisfactory, as was noted in the last inspection, with storage being a particular concern,

especially at a time when numbers opting for art in Year 9 are growing rapidly. Although sixth form students work hard and produce very good work, the lack of a studio space for them restricts the continuity and progression of their work, forcing them to work out of their portfolios and sketchbooks, rather than a personal studio space. There has been a small improvement in the use of information and communications technology since the last inspection; when the planned ICT initiative comes into being, the department staff are trained and ready to make further strides in that direction. Overall, the department has made a satisfactory response to the last inspection. With the very good and well informed teaching of a challenging curriculum, the department is well placed to improve further in the coming years.

## **BUSINESS EDUCATION**

131. The business education department runs a range of courses. In GCSE business, standards are in line with national expectations. Students are keen and attitudes to the subject are good. They are able to discuss the effect of external influences on business, for example, trade unions or pressure groups. They have good keyboard skills and are able to use spreadsheets to help them analyse questionnaires. Generally their discussion is limited by an inadequate grasp of business terminology but this improves with the teachers' help, and as they focus more clearly upon the task at hand.

132. The department runs a part 1 GNVQ business (intermediate) course in Year 10, and the full intermediate course and a GNVQ advanced business course in the sixth form.

133. Standards for all are good. Students achieve well for their particular course level. Results until now have been variable, but over the last three years have usually included awards at merit and/or distinction level as well as pass grades. However, the larger group sizes that are currently taking these courses have received some very good results on modules assessed so far; predicted grades indicate a significant leap forward.

134. Teaching is good. Teachers have a good knowledge of their subject, and relationships with the students are positive. Teachers have good questioning techniques, which prompt recall and advance the topic whilst making students think for themselves. Teachers know their students well. In one lesson, information and communication technology skills were particularly prominent and the business aspects of a questionnaire were unexploited; although satisfactory a more balanced approach would be better.

135. GCSE and GNVQ intermediate and advanced courses are very well organised. There are detailed handbooks for each course and schemes of work are comprehensive. Students have key skills booklets and logbooks; assessment procedures are good and marking is thorough. For GNVQ courses ratification of grades is still undertaken by external moderators who usually confirm teachers' marks.

136. The head of business education is working very effectively to raise the status of the subject and is supported by an experienced team. As a result, numbers are growing and standards are rising. Lessons are held in rooms all over the college campus and this is not helpful.

137. Added to GNVQ courses in business, the college runs part 1 GNVQ health and social care (foundation) in Year 10, and GNVQ leisure and tourism (intermediate) and GNVQ science (advanced) in the sixth form. The health and social care course is well run. Students' work is presented satisfactorily with clear use of information and communication technology skills. It is marked well. Tasks are clearly identifiable and standards are good

overall. Leisure and tourism students share some of their lessons with business students and are effectively taught how to plan and present their work.

138. Students have good keyboard skills and recall earlier work well when prompted. GNVQ advanced science is a very popular and successful course; it is well organised and results are high.

139. Economics and law at A level are part of the business education department. Standards are high in these subjects; students are taught well and background documentation is well presented.

140. Since the last inspection standards have been maintained in business education and a wider variety of vocational courses is now available. More students are recruited to GNVQ subjects and numbers are generally rising.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

141. At Key Stage 3 students experience a broad and balanced course and this includes food studies, graphics, textiles, resistant materials, control and ICT. Work is well presented in the form of practical tasks or design assignments and the process is suitably structured. Students build up a resource of knowledge, understanding and skills to enable them to tackle the more open-ended work in the GCSE programme. Greater emphasis has recently been placed on the improvement of graphical skills and presentational techniques and this has been effective. Students build up a folder of preparatory and planning work and most take care and respond appropriately. Opportunities exist for students to develop personal interests and many show enjoyment and enthusiasm in their work. There are many good examples of work from folders on display. Practical skills are generally good and the final products are well manufactured. Many students use ICT skills to enhance the quality of their work but there is room for further development in this area. Students respond well to the use of exemplar materials and there has been a steady improvement in the overall quality of work. Observation of lessons and teacher assessments indicate that by the end of the key stage students' attainment is at about the national expectation.

142. Work at Key Stage 4 is more focused and students may opt for a GCSE course from graphics, resistant materials, food or electronic products. Students acquire a range of graphical techniques and the quality overall is much higher than in the previous phase. This provides students with an important planning and presentational tool. Some very good examples were seen on display and the work of the students on the specialist courses is commendable. Students use a design framework to provide structure for their work. Individuality is encouraged and students develop personal styles and interests. Much benefit is obtained from the range of exemplar materials which illustrate the quality of presentation and the standards to be achieved. Greater emphasis is placed on the use of ICT skills and considerable use is made of the small number of computers in specialist rooms using graphics, design and manufacturing software. Students also use the central facilities, the library and their computers at home to enhance and extend the range of their work. Since the last inspection standards have improved and last year the number of students gaining higher grades (A\*-C) in GCSE was at, or above, the national average. This is particularly significant as many able students do not study a technology subject and would have been expected to improve these figures even more.

143. The number of students in the sixth form groups is small but they demonstrate evidence of good progress and they perform to their potential. They develop interests

through their project work and through meticulous research and development produce well designed products. Two examples seen of a device to deter herons from eating fish from ornamental ponds and mood lighting equipment brought together a range of electronics into useful, attractive and practical products. All students were successful in the A level examination last year.

144. Students show interest in their studies and attitudes are positive. Behaviour is good and relationships between students and with teachers are sound. Students are generally attentive and listen carefully to instructions. Many show evidence of a capacity for individual work and much good work develops from personal interests. Students work in groups and in pairs and through these opportunities develop a range of personal and social skills. They observe codes of conduct in specialist rooms and workshops and work sensibly and safely.

145. Teachers are knowledgeable and competent and their planning and organisation are good. They use exemplar materials and display well and reinforce learning in a number of ways. Teachers demonstrate an effective questioning technique and discipline is good. They remain friendly and helpful, expectations are high and the pace of lessons is good. Teachers operate a comprehensive assessment system which involves the students in self-assessment. Information is stored centrally and used effectively in tracking and calculating 'value-added'. Teachers are assisted by a team of experienced and competent non-teaching staff who make a significant contribution to the life of the department, and the college.

146. All lessons seen at the time of the inspection were satisfactory or above. Most were good or very good and there were examples of excellent teaching.

147. The team is well led by an able and experienced teacher who holds a Teacher of the Year national award from the Institute of Electrical Engineering. Documentation is full and detailed and schemes of work are helpful and clear. Accommodation is only adequate because the size of some rooms is very small; there is a need for upgrading to get a better fit with curriculum activities. The department would also operate more effectively from a common base. Resources are adequate for current courses but there is a need to increase the number of sewing machines in textiles and to increase the provision of ICT equipment throughout the department. Schemes of work cover the statutory requirements of the National Curriculum but not all Key Stage 4 students are involved.

148. The department has made steady progress since the last inspection especially in improving student performance in external examinations. Teaching quality has improved and a range of practical issues has been attended to. The department serves the college well.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

149. Over the last three years A\* - C grades at GCSE have been variable. In 1997 they were in line with the national average but by 1998 they had improved to well above, with girls in particular gaining 20 per cent better than the average. In 1999 A\*-C grades were slightly above the national average, at 54 per cent. A\*-G grades have been above the average for the last three years with boys gaining 100 per cent in 1997 and girls 100 per cent in 1998 and 1999.

150. Girls generally achieve better than boys in examinations, but in 1997, in relation to national figures, boys did better than girls. In 1999, performance indicators showed that

students were doing a little less well in geography than in other subjects they took. The department has thoroughly investigated those results and identified some causes, including the performance of borderline C/D candidates. Standards of work observed in lessons and in books and files suggest that student achievement is higher than suggested by the 1999 examination results.

151. A level grades over the last three years have been in line with, or better than, the national average. In 1997 43 per cent gained A or B grades and in 1998 and 1999 the figure was 33 per cent. The entry for 1999 was much larger than in the previous year, with 24 candidates. Boys (14) performed above the national average and girls (10) below. The number entered confirms the popularity of the subject.

152. In lessons at the end of Key Stage 3, achievement is above average. Students have good written skills. They have the ability to take notes during presentations, they complete worksheets well and there is a large volume of imaginative work, such as letter writing concerning local by-pass and building issues and imagined trips to the centre of the earth. Basic mapping and number skills are in place early in Year 7 and there is good use of measurement, co-ordinates and graphing techniques. Students gain confidence in lessons and as a result they are able to listen, read and perform well in the classroom.

153. At Key Stage 4 and post-16, achievement is above average. Students have developed good research and enquiry skills, seen in local surveys and fieldwork and there is the beginning of a good skills base in examination techniques. Students are adept in the use of geographical modelling and this was seen particularly in a criticism of the four main models of urban development. Students are able to think for themselves and they have the ability to make reasoned decisions. In lessons there is no significant difference in the achievement of boys and girls.

154. Since the last inspection competency in ICT has increased and there are examples of data manipulation and creation of graphs in Year 9 and word processing across all key stages. Progress is assisted by collaboration with the ICT department and by the geography department providing lists of appropriate web sites. Students' standards in lessons have improved since the last inspection.

155. Teaching is good or better in 80 per cent of lessons and never less than satisfactory in the remainder, across all the key stages. The firm and friendly approach of teachers leads to good relationships, which give students confidence and enables them to seek and take advice and perform well in the classroom. Teachers use wide local and international knowledge to add flavour to lessons and stimulate the interest of students. Information for students regarding attainment levels and progress is good; their awareness is strengthened by rigorous assessment and target-setting and good use is made of homework. It is a tool, not just a catch-up exercise and is used to stretch the performance of students. The high expectation of students is seen in innovative lessons, such as a Year 7 demonstration of home-made and very active volcanoes. Lessons are enjoyable occasions. They are conducted with energy and such is the use of planning and resources that students at all levels of attainment are able to make good progress. This was particularly evident in the work of a student with special educational needs, who is achieving above the national average.

156. This is a united and hard working department, using its resources well and making the best of cramped accommodation. It is well led and there is good monitoring of its progress, resulting in a satisfactory level of improvement since the last inspection. The whole team undertakes regular reviews of student and teacher performance and resulting

changes to schemes of work and assessment procedures are largely successful, as seen in a recent review of the Key Stage 3 syllabus. The department is doing a good job of training geographers as distinct from just teaching students geography. Further improvement might stem from the inclusion of more geography specific detail in the handbook and a review of setting arrangements within the department.

## **HISTORY**

157. Judged by National Curriculum teacher assessments, scrutiny of students' work and observation of lessons, attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is slightly above national expectations, showing good progress through the key stage. Most students understand why events occurred. They can, for instance, give clear explanations of how Charles I's over-ruling of parliament led to civil war. They are also aware of how events can be interpreted in different ways, using the evacuation from Dunkirk as an example. They use empathy imaginatively, putting life into their explanations of the past. They can organise their work well, keeping clear notes that are helpful for revision.

158. By the end of Key Stage 4, standards are very much higher than national expectations, particularly among girls. In 1999, 80 per cent of candidates achieved high grades of A\* to C, compared with a national average in similar schools of 54 per cent. These results were considerably better than in the previous two years, and better than those of most other subjects. Girls performed very much better than boys, though this difference was not so evident in the work seen. Students continue to develop their historical skills, showing an ability to use sources intelligently, and research in depth, as they did in their study of the Cold War.

159. Standards in the sixth form are not as high as current GCSE results would predict, with a point score in 1999 just below the national average for history. However, results in some previous years have been very good. Much depends on the prior attainment of the students, and in 1999 there were several whose targets, though modest, were exceeded. The quality of work seen varied. The best is very good indeed: essays well researched, well written with perceptive insights, and covering the subject matter in great depth. Weaker students are held back by weak literacy skills. They misuse words and cannot express ideas with clarity.

160. Teaching is good, with some that is very good observed at all key stages. Teachers plan assiduously, injecting into their lessons fast pace and interesting variety. Relations with students are universally excellent, creating an atmosphere conducive to hard work. In most lessons expectations are high, with successful use of homework, which is marked to a very high standard of thoroughness. Evidence of progress is fully recorded, and used to predict grades in public examinations. Teachers have good knowledge of the subject, though they could use it more effectively to make the story come alive. Some topics are studied with the aid of computer programmes, but this approach is not yet fully developed. Several examples of purposeful student presentations were observed at all key stages. For instance, students had to research a topic such as Peel's strategy in the 1830's and make a case for praising or belittling it. Such presentations were certainly successful in demonstrating good depth of knowledge, but sadly led to little discussion afterwards. Teachers have devised separate schemes of work appropriate to students with special needs; and they give time and energy to arranging many visits out of college to broaden the curriculum and sustain interest.

161. Learning is good at all key stages. By the end of a lesson students are clear about what they have covered, with concise notes for future reference. They know what to do,

and how to set about a task. They would learn even more if they had more opportunity to discuss and share ideas. In some lessons they ask questions as well as answer them, but not as frequently as they might. Very effective learning was observed in a sixth form lesson in which students were each contributing a section of an essay on fascism, typed on to computers, and then scrutinised, discussed and edited by the rest of the group. Students with SEN make good progress, thanks to appropriate tasks and sensitive guidance from the teacher. Where support is available it is effective.

162. The previous inspection reported that assessment sometimes failed to indicate levels of achievement, that some students in Year 13 were underachieving, and there was too little use of information and communication technology. It also said that examination results did not reflect the standard of work observed in lessons. Thanks to strong leadership and the high morale of all history staff, these minor defects have been remedied. Standards, already high, have been maintained and improved. There is more work to be done in developing ICT but its use is greater than in most schools, and Year 13 students are achieving to the level that can be expected from their prior attainment. The recording and use of assessment are now very good indeed. Development is needed to improve the performance of boys, and raise achievement still further in the sixth form.

## **INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY**

163. Standards of ICT are in line with national expectations at Key Stage 3. Boys and girls achieve similarly. Students with special educational needs are hardly discernible in the classroom; they integrate very well and are helped on by either peers, the teacher or technician and keep up with levels achieved by other members of the class.

164. Students showed that they could use databases in Year 8, where they reached level 5 easily. They searched and loaded a database and sorted data about soldiers who died in the trenches. They refined their searches by doing a second search, but could not retrieve information required in one attempt. There is ample evidence of students creating databases in supplementary files. In Year 9, students choose information and communication technology as part of the option schemes. These students continue to build information and communication technology skills and often reached level 6; students make good progress.

165. A rota arrangement ensures key skills are taught in Years 10 and 11 through the science department. These lessons are effective and standards are in line with national expectations.

166. Over and above the set information and communication technology lessons at both Key Stages 3 and 4, students received a substantial boost to their entitlement through a well-structured cross-curricular programme. Standards are sound in information and communication technology terms, and the use of information and communication technology is very good; students showed higher levels of knowledge and understanding of necessary information and communication technology skills in geography, science, business studies, music, design and technology and mathematics. In chemistry, for example, students created computer-generated graphs very effectively in order to show rates of change in mass, having entered data to a spreadsheet. They showed that they could copy cells, insert columns, and headings and were able to write a formula to calculate loss of mass; they could copy this formula to speed up calculations and successfully select an appropriate type of graph; in this case they used a scatter graph.

167. Courses such as GNVQ and GCSE business studies offer students further experience of information and communication technology, but National Curriculum levels do not rise greatly. However, students make very good use of spreadsheets, CD ROMs, the Internet and the Intranet.

168. The lessons seen were a mix of information and communication technology key skills and subjects such as chemistry, business education and geography. Teaching was, overall, good. In approximately a third of lessons it was very good; in the rest it was good, except one, where it was satisfactory. Good teaching was exemplified by careful planning and good relationships. Teachers made good interventions, offered supportive help and had a very good knowledge of the necessary skills. It was not apparent that some of teaching was by non-specialists and this was in part due to the help of the very competent information and communication technology technician. The use of information and communication technology training under a recent government initiative also contributed to other subject teachers' expertise. Students have a good self-knowledge and asked for help when it was required. The good quality of learning matched that of teaching and this was down to good pace, high interest value and good rapport.

169. In GCSE business education in Year 10 and in GNVQ in Year 12, students learned how to analyse data and report on their findings using quite advanced information and communication technology skills. Questions were rare at both levels. Students were confident.

170. There is a very good development plan that fits well into the college development plan. Information and communication technology modules are embedded in many departments but not in all. Assessment procedures are satisfactory, but should be better when the already designed new model, which has excellent potential, is implemented. The long-term absence of the information and communication technology network manager is putting an unacceptable strain on the director of information and communication technology, who recently joined the college staff and is doing a very good job. He is advancing the department very effectively with the help of the information and communication technology technician.

171. Cross-curricular use of computers is good, varied and growing all the time. It adds another dimension to students' ICT experience and ensures that all get at least a reasonable entitlement. Sixth formers use information and communication technology very effectively and for many different projects. For example, they create news-sheets, word-process essays and use a computer program to present their industrial links, coursework and their own presentations. These are of a very high standard.

172. Since the last inspection, standards have improved in terms of a greater cross-section of skills, which are now in place for both students and staff. There are improved resources and improved curricular coverage of not only the essential information and communication technology programme of study but within the subjects across the college. A very positive picture is emerging.

## **MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

173. All students study French and Spanish in Years 7 and 8, and choose to do one or both languages in Year 9. They study one or both languages in Years 10 and 11. In recent years, French GCSE results have been above national standards. In 1997 and 1998 Spanish GCSE results were below national standards. In 1999 Spanish results were

above average: these were the first students to do a full five-year course in Spanish. The results in both languages in 1999 were above those for most other subjects in the college which were above national standards. Younger students are working towards these levels. At the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999 many had reached level 5 in French in listening, speaking, reading and writing. In recent years A level results in French and Spanish have been slightly above national standards. In lessons standards are above national averages at both key stages and in the sixth form.

174. At Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 students are stronger in listening, speaking and reading and weaker in writing. When speaking, Year 8 Spanish students were able to perform dialogues in Spanish about booking a table. When listening, Year 9 Spanish students were able to recognise words from a song, and put the lines jumbled on a work sheet into the correct order. When reading, Year 8 French students could recognise different sorts of television programmes. However, they made unnecessary errors in grammar and spelling.

175. Year 12 French students were very animated when discussing in groups. When writing, Year 13 French students could write well about improving the environment using a variety of tenses. Generally, however, students do not check their written work carefully enough. Girls usually attain better results than boys. There are no significant variations between students of different ethnicity, background, nor ability.

176. Students spend most of their time using the foreign languages in listening, speaking, reading and writing: these are at lower levels than they would be in English. Students only use numbers occasionally. Students have good access to computers, and use bar charts and visuals as well as word processing.

177. The department has successfully addressed almost all the issues raised in the last inspection report. GCSE results have improved, and students are speaking more French and Spanish to communicate with their teachers and each other. However, some students in the sixth form are still making basic errors in writing.

178. The overall quality of teaching is good. At Key Stages 3 and 4 and in the sixth form the quality of teaching is usually good, and sometimes very good or excellent. The quality of teaching is improving standards and ensures satisfactory or good progress. The teachers plan a sequence of activities, are proficient in the foreign languages, project their voices clearly, and have good accents in the languages they teach. They use the target language for large parts of the lesson. They use overhead projectors and other resources effectively to increase learning. Standards of discipline are generally good. Time is used well, and some teachers are good at encouraging oral work in pairs or groups: however, others do not use pair work sufficiently. Staff display students' work, maps, posters, and other authentic material, which increase the students' knowledge of the languages and countries concerned. However, more maps and display are needed in some classrooms. Students' work is assessed regularly, and results inform subsequent teaching. Useful homework is set regularly. The teaching of those with special needs is satisfactory, and meets the needs of these students as well. Teachers manage classes well. For example, in a Year 7 Spanish class, the teacher revised numbers from one to ten by saying them and holding up cards. Students chorused the numbers to ensure good pronunciation, then she hid the cards, forcing them to guess which card was hidden. The teacher held up a clock, and asked them various times. Students then took over the teacher's role, holding the clock and asking the time. Finally the teacher played a tape, and students had to write down the times they heard. In a Year 8 French class, the teacher showed pictures of various leisure activities on the overhead projector, and students chorused them. She then

mixed up the pictures, and individual students had to say what was happening. She played a tape, and students wrote the activities down. Next she gave out envelopes containing different activities, and students made up conversations with their partner. Finally, students performed their dialogues for the whole class. In both these lessons the students were actively involved throughout, worked very well on the different tasks, and made very good progress.

179. The vast majority of students behave well. They show interest in their work, sustain their concentration, and develop good study skills. Their response is usually good, and sometimes very good at Key Stages 3 and 4 and in the sixth form. Many students show an obvious sense of enjoyment in lessons. They work well in pairs and groups, and sometimes have opportunities to use their initiative in creating role-plays and working independently. Their positive attitudes are enabling them to improve their performance. However, a few students find it difficult to concentrate and achieve their potential. Most students, including the most and least able and those with special educational needs, make good progress in lessons at both key stages and in the sixth form.

180. The organisation of the curriculum meets statutory requirements. The head of modern languages monitors the progress of students in both languages. The department is very well led and organised, and has prioritised development plans. Visits to France, and exchanges with France and Spain, encourage social interaction and personal responsibility. The textbooks and other materials used, together with the visits abroad, help develop awareness of the diversity and richness of other cultures. The quality of most teaching, the attitudes of most students, visits abroad, and the leadership of the head of modern languages have a positive effect on standards. However, insufficient use of pair work and the errors students make in written work are preventing students from achieving even higher standards.

## **MUSIC**

181. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is above average. Teacher assessments in 1999 at the end of Key Stage 3 show the percentage of students attaining the expected level 5 is above the national average. Boys' results are broadly in line with national figures and the girls' are well above. In work seen, attainment is above average. Year 9 students are able to locate and play correctly the notes of major and minor scales on keyboards together with basic I, IV and V chords, and make use of these to create good short compositions. A good range of musical vocabulary is known and understood, together with knowledge of representative styles and composers. In addition to keyboard work, good singing is a strong feature throughout the key stage, with consequent good aural development. Written work, in notation or in words, is neatly presented.

182. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is above average. The number of students who take music for the GCSE is not great, but results over the past three years are very high compared with national averages and significantly improved since the last inspection. Year 11 students know and understand a better-than-average range of musical vocabulary relating to harmonic and melodic conventions, musical styles and the musical elements. Standards of performance are good and written work is well expressed and presented. Musical technology is effectively used in the presentation of compositions.

183. Attainment in the sixth form is average. The course available is AS level spread over two years, and student numbers are small. One student entered in 1999 attained grade C. Students' standards of performance are generally good and good use is made of technology in the development of compositions. However, some individuals do not apply

themselves sufficiently and consequently produce less work than is appropriate. In analytical exercises, although a good body of knowledge is understood, students are not always confident in applying it.

184. The quality of learning is very good at Key Stages 3 and 4 and good in the sixth form. In the latter, productivity and pace of working are not always as good as they should be. However, overall, students throughout the key stages acquire their knowledge, skills and understanding better than expected and high, average and lower attaining students, including those with special educational needs, make very good progress. A particularly good example seen was a Year 8 lesson about major and minor tonality and the significance of 'home notes' using the song *Walking on the Moon* as a basis. The needs of a visually impaired student were successfully met by means of large font materials and the help of a learning support assistant. Two students with marked aptitudes were given appropriate extension activities, and all, with repetitive practice, learned the song to a good standard and reinforced their understanding of major and minor tonality effectively. Students' attitudes and behaviour, which are generally very good, have a very positive effect on the quality of their learning. For example, students are interested and sustain concentration well in lessons. The very good quality of learning also owes much to very effective teaching.

185. The quality of teaching is very good at Key Stages 3 and 4 and good in the sixth form. Knowledge and understanding are very good at all stages. Students are effectively managed. Lessons are very well planned, as in the Year 8 example quoted above, and methods are very effective. Teachers give a generous amount of time to extra-curricular activities, such as orchestra, choirs and wind groups, which are well supported and achieve good standards. There are termly concerts, much appreciated by the community, and a musical every two years, the most recent being a very successful presentation of *Oliver*.

186. Ninety-four students enhance their musical attainment with additional instrumental lessons in college and many others do so privately. This additional tuition contributes to the very high standards of attainment in GCSE examinations.

187. Since the last inspection, GCSE standards have risen steadily to their present very high levels. AS level courses have been established in the sixth form and the use of musical technology has developed strongly. More computers are on the way to make greater accessibility possible at all levels.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

188. The attainment of students at Key Stage 3 meets national expectations. Year 9 boys are fit and energetic. They play rugby with good ball handling skills and an understanding of safe tackles. They are not yet able to consistently apply these skills in the small game situation. Girls work cooperatively to plan and perform dance and gymnastics sequences. The majority of girls have average performance skills but their knowledge of compositional criteria is good. The work seen during the inspection confirms the 1999 end of Key Stage 3 teacher assessments, which indicate the large majority of students are meeting national criteria and 10 per cent are working above this level.

189. In 1999, 48.6 per cent of students achieved A\*-C grades in GCSE physical education examinations. This is just below the national average of 49.8 per cent. These 1999 results show a significant improvement from the 1997 results which were well below the national average. Year 11 girls are attaining above average standards in netball. They have secure footwork and passing skills and a good knowledge of the more advanced

strategies of the game. In basketball, Year 11 students have a sound knowledge of the rules and tactics but their ability to analyse performance is hindered by their lack of confidence orally. Students in Years 10 and 11 have a satisfactory understanding of the body systems and are able to prepare for exercise effectively. Sixteen girls entered the GCSE dance examination in 1999. They achieved 37.5 per cent A\*-C grades which was below the national average of 46.7 per cent. In Years 10 and 11 girls are able to copy and repeat movements and respond imaginatively to creative tasks. Their technical vocabulary is limited. The majority of students in Years 10 and 11 do not take the GCSE examinations. Overall, they are attaining at a level that is expected nationally but a significant minority of students attain above this level in hockey and netball. The majority of students know how to warm up and stretch effectively and are able to work independently in the fitness suite. A level was taken for the first time in 1999 by 10 students. One student achieved grade B and 8 students gained grades A-E. These results are below the national average. Students in Year 12 are attaining below national expectations in theoretical knowledge but have a good understanding and level of personal fitness. Students in Years 12 and 13 attain high standards in hockey, aerobics, football and fitness.

190. The attainment of some individual students and teams is very good. They achieve high standards in football, basketball, netball, rugby, hockey, athletics, and tennis. Students play inter-house competitions and take part in sports day and an evening of dance. Their standards in these activities are above national expectations.

191. All teaching is at least sound and over a third is very good. As a result of this good teaching the students' learning is good at Key Stage 3 and in the sixth form, and very good at Key Stage 4. The very good teaching addresses all areas of the National Curriculum in the appropriate balance. This enables students to acquire new skills, consolidate them in team situations and evaluate their performances. Year 7 students come to the college with little or no knowledge of basketball and girls' football. They quickly acquire the new skills involved and increase their knowledge of the game because of the very good subject expertise of their teachers. Students make good progress in planning activities in gymnastics and dance through the focus given to this area of the National Curriculum by the teachers. The equal progress of students, regardless of their different physical abilities, is well supported by the teaching in ability groups and sometimes in gender groups at Key Stage 3. When the range of attainment in a teaching group demands greater flexibility and guidance than whole group tasks, teachers do not always sub-divide into small groups according to ability. However, they circulate well to extend the more able students and help those needing more practice. Teachers use a variety of strategies to challenge students especially in theory lessons. They use information and communication technology well, providing the opportunity for GCSE and A level students to access and exchange information. All teachers recap previous work and share the lesson objectives with the students at the beginning of the lesson. This is a particularly successful strategy with the lower attaining groups who often need to refine and revisit existing skills before progress can be made. Teachers' recording, marking and assessment procedures are very thorough and students are kept well informed by the teacher comment sheet. Teachers miss opportunities to promote literacy skills. Key words are not consistently displayed and subject specific vocabulary is not fully discussed with the students. In a few lessons, for example GCSE dance, teachers could drive the learning further forwards by promoting the technical vocabulary at the same time as the performance skills. More use of work cards would promote planning and evaluative activities and give students more opportunity for independence in their learning. Students behave well, are keen and enthusiastic and have very good relationships with their teachers. The number of students who opt to study GCSE physical education and dance shows their interest in the subject. This positive attitude enhances their learning.

192. The curriculum meets statutory requirements and there is very good provision for the sixth form. The Junior Sports Leaders Award, part of the Key Stage 3 curriculum, is an excellent initiative which promotes many independent learning skills. Students are enthusiastic about the range of extra-curricular activities provided by the department and by the OAST scheme. The department has strong links with the community, and the sports centre is extensively used by adult groups during the day and evening. Students and community users work together in the high quality fitness suite which is part of the excellent new sports facilities. The extensive extra-curricular provision, the themes within the dance curriculum and the sharing of the facilities with the community contribute fully to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students.

193. The head of department leads a hard working and dedicated team. They work well together and have a good balance of subject expertise. Leadership would be more effective if teaching were regularly monitored by the head of department and the very good practice in the department shared. Many improvements have been made since the previous inspection. Documentation is thorough and comprehensive units of work support the good teaching. These need to include risk assessment. The quality of teaching has improved. It is now very good in over one third of lessons. Most attainment is in line with national expectations with a substantial minority of students attaining above this level. The attainment of students on the GCSE course has improved significantly.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

194. By the end of Key Stage 3 attainment is broadly in line with the expectations set out in the locally Agreed Syllabus although a significant number are achieving above that level. Literacy skills of the majority are strong but some students have obvious severe weaknesses in literacy, particularly in Year 7. Most are able to write at length and show good understanding of the beliefs of major world religions such as Christianity and Islam. Year 9 students showed that they were able to analyse and draw conclusions on the Creation story and the 'Big Bang' theory. Some good examples of the secure use of IT skills were evident in work on the Millennium, showing strong spiritual and moral feelings in the presentations.

195. By the end of Key Stage 4, students attain standards which are in line with the national expectation. Students embarked on the GCSE long and short courses in Years 11 and 10 respectively show a strong commitment to the subject and produce some lengthy, competent coursework assignments, showing a clear grasp of subject content. Year 11 students used the Internet facility with confidence to extract and analyse information related to Jewish festivals. Non-examination students are studying two RE modules but, although there has been a small increase in the time allocation since the last inspection, it is still insufficient to meet the needs of the locally Agreed Syllabus, as is so in the sixth form where students' RE contact is limited to occasional forum groups and day conferences with spiritual and moral inputs. Year 10 students were particularly involved in a discussion of racism which reflected much personal experience from some group members, as part of the non-examination courses.

196. The quality of teaching is at least satisfactory with most lessons seen being of good quality. Lessons are carefully prepared to involve students in a range of activities, with mainly appropriate resources which extend students' knowledge and understanding. Most lessons have good pace and time is used well to impact upon students' ability to research and analyse actively, sometimes using developing IT skills, such as Year 11 research on Judaism. Teachers have strong subject knowledge and are able to support students well

when in difficulty. Relationships and attitudes are very good, most students behave extremely sensibly in many paired and group activities and little teacher intervention is necessary. Homework is set and marked regularly with supportive comments and targets for improvement identified, but consideration needs to be given to assessment procedures which give students a clearer idea of attainment over time. Students' oral skills are well developed in many discussion opportunities but literacy skills could be further improved through class reading of texts as well as focusing on the need for technical language comprehension for lower ability students.

197. Recent staffing difficulties have been resolved and the organisation of the subject is now secure. Accommodation, although huddled in the main, is satisfactory and the specialist room has some excellent displays of students' recent work. Resources are generally satisfactory although visual aid material, artefacts and the use of local places of worship for visits need development. The college library is well used both for its text and IT resources by students engaged in research.

198. Since the previous inspection, the range of activities in teaching has increased to provide more consistent learning practice, allowing students to take more responsibility for their own learning; homework is used well to extend the curriculum and promote independent learning of students. Although there has been a small increase in teaching time this is still insufficient at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form to meet statutory requirements. This is, however, one of the college's priorities for future curriculum development.