

INSPECTION REPORT

WEST EXE TECHNOLOGY COLLEGE

Exeter

LEA area: Devon

Unique reference number: 113505

Headteacher: Steve Maddern

Reporting inspector: Ray Palmer
31198

Dates of inspection: 10th – 14th January 2000

Inspection number: 186267

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of college: Comprehensive

School category: Community

Age range of students: 12 to 16

Gender of students: Mixed

College address: Hatherleigh Road
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Devon

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Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Paul Smith

Date of previous inspection: 20th – 24th November 1995

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		Special educational needs	The college's results and students' achievements
			Teaching and learning
			Leadership and management
			Key Issues for action
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			Partnership with parents and carers
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David Burbidge	Team inspector	Science	
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Stuart Johnson	Team inspector	Music	
Gilbert McGinn	Team inspector	History	
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REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	7 - 11
Information about the college	
How good the college is	
What the college does well	
What could be improved	
How the college has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Students' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the college	
How well the college is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the college	
PART B: COMMENTARY	
HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?	12 - 15
The college's results and achievements	
Students' attitudes, values and personal development	
HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?	16 - 18
HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO STUDENTS?	18 - 20
HOW WELL DOES THE COLLEGE CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?	20 - 22
HOW WELL DOES THE COLLEGE WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS	22
HOW WELL IS THE COLLEGE LED AND MANAGED?	22 - 25
WHAT SHOULD THE COLLEGE DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?	26 - 27
PART C: COLLEGE DATA AND INDICATORS	28 - 32
PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES	33 - 54

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE COLLEGE

West Exe Technology College is a comprehensive, community college for boys and girls aged 12 to 16 years situated in an outer area of the city of Exeter. The college receives students from a wide range of social backgrounds. Until 1999, it was known as St Thomas High School. It is a phase 2 designated Technology College. It holds the Investors in People, Investors in Educational Business Partnership, and Sportsmark awards, and is a training centre for information and communication technology, registered under the New Opportunities Fund scheme. Its annual standard admissions' number is 300, but it admitted a larger than usual intake of 324 students into the current Year 8. The college attracts students, particularly those with special educational needs, from outside its immediate catchment area. The college is a bigger than average secondary school. In September 1999, there were 1191 students on roll, 635 boys and 556 girls, compared to 1193 at the time of the last inspection in 1995. There are 17 students from a non-white ethnic background. The nine students, for whom English is an additional language, are competent in English and require no additional help. The proportion of students (14 per cent) entitled to free school meals is below the national average. There are 278 students (23 per cent) on the college's register for special educational needs, a proportion, which is above the national average. Most of the students with special educational needs have moderate learning difficulties, although a sizeable minority has emotional and behavioural difficulties. The proportion of students with statements of special educational needs is broadly in line with the national average. Students' attainment on entry is below average; this is indicated by their results in the National Curriculum tests taken at the end of Key Stage 2 and by the college's own data which includes the results from cognitive ability tests taken in Year 8. The college's targets for achievement at the end of Key Stage 4 include the suitably challenging aim of 40 per cent of students to gain five or more grades A*-C in the GCSE examinations in 2000, compared with 36 per cent who achieved this target in 1999.

HOW GOOD THE COLLEGE IS

The overall effectiveness of the college is satisfactory. Standards relative to students' prior attainment are satisfactory. Students achieve good standards throughout both key stages in design and technology and information technology. The progress of students in a few subjects is hindered because standards of writing are not high enough. Students' attitudes to their work are satisfactory; most are enthusiastic and well motivated, but a minority of students do not want to work and are too casual in their approach. The quality of teaching and the quality of learning are both satisfactory overall; they were judged to be good or better in over half of the lessons seen. The college provides a balanced, broad and relevant curriculum suited to the needs of its students at both key stages. There is good provision of support and guidance for students about personal and educational matters. The college supplies parents with appropriate information and has established effective links with them. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection, with much of this being achieved in the last two years. The headteacher provides effective leadership. Governors and senior managers know the college's weaknesses and are developing strategies for improvement, which are slowly succeeding in a few areas. Financial management is efficient and the college's spending is related effectively to its educational priorities and achieved in a cost-effective way. The college provides satisfactory value for money.

What the college does well

- The headteacher provides strong and effective leadership; governors and senior managers are developing suitable strategies for improvement.
- The quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspection.
- Good pastoral support; students feel valued; teachers have a caring attitude.
- Standards of achievement have improved greatly in design and technology.
- Students' skills in information and communication technology have improved.
- Good assessment and target setting help to improve students' standards of work.
- Support and guidance, moral and social development and relationships between students and teachers are good.
- Students improve their work through participation in a good range of extra-curricular activities.
- The college's partnership with the community is a strength.
- Financial management is very effective.

What could be improved

- Attainment in external examinations is not high enough in English at Key Stage 3 and science and mathematics at Key Stage 4.
- Standards in literacy are too low.
- A few teachers have low expectations of students and use a limited range of teaching techniques.
- The quality and use of individual education plans for students with special educational needs are often unsatisfactory. In a few classes, these students receive insufficient support.
- The quality and frequency of homework are inconsistent.
- A minority have poor attitudes to work and misbehave. The level of exclusions is very high.
- Attendance is well below average; students' punctuality is unsatisfactory.
- Arrangements for collective worship do not meet statutory requirements.

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

HOW THE COLLEGE HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Since the previous inspection of November 1995, the trend in the college's points score per pupil in GCSE has risen faster than the national trend. The college has made satisfactory progress in meeting the nine key issues for improvement identified in the previous report. Most improvement has come in the last two years. The amount of unsatisfactory teaching has decreased considerably, though some remains. Standards of work have risen in the subjects regarded previously as weak; the curriculum now meets students' needs; the college is actively tackling underachievement; improved procedures for managing students' behaviour are in place; subject consultation evenings for parents have been introduced. The college recognises that there is still much more to do in raising students' levels of attainment, attendance, and behaviour. There has been little improvement in the quality of homework provision or in levels of attendance; the requirements for statutory collective worship are still not met. The college has the capacity to make further improvements.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 14 and 16 year olds based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 3 and in GCSE examinations.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1997	1998	1999	1999
Key Stage 3 test	D	C	D	D
GCSE examinations	D	D	D	D

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

Standards of attainment are below average throughout the college. Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 3 over the period 1996 to 1999 for both boys and girls were close to the national average in mathematics, and below average in English and science. In 1999, the results in both mathematics and science were in line with national averages for all schools, while, unusually, they were well below average in English. The trend in the college's overall performance in the end of Key Stage 3 tests in all three core subjects, is in line with the national trend. Students' results in GCSE examinations are below the national average for all schools and below the average of similar schools. The trend in the college's average total GCSE points score is rising faster than the national trend. Standards achieved are satisfactory relative to students' lower than average levels of attainment on entry to the college. Standards of work seen in classes were often higher than those indicated by results in external examinations. Standards in written work were not high enough in many classes observed. The college sets demanding targets for students' external examination performances, based on its good bank of assessment data.

STUDENTS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the college	Satisfactory overall, but many students do not work hard enough.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Satisfactory; a minority of students behave poorly in class and around the college.
Personal development and relationships	Personal development is good; relationships among students and between teachers and students are mostly good.
Attendance	Attendance is well below average; punctuality is unsatisfactory.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of students:	aged 12-14 years	aged 14-16 years
	satisfactory	satisfactory

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

Teaching is satisfactory overall. It was satisfactory or better in 93 per cent of lessons seen, very good in ten per cent and unsatisfactory in seven per cent. There is a small amount of unsatisfactory teaching in many subjects. In English, teaching is satisfactory in Key Stage 3 and good in Key Stage 4; in mathematics it is satisfactory in both key stages and in science it is good in Key Stage 3 and satisfactory in Key Stage 4. In design and technology very good teaching occurs in Key Stage 4. Homework is inconsistent in quality, quantity and frequency. There is insufficient attention to the teaching of literacy skills. In a minority of classes the work is not well matched to the needs of students of different attainment.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE COLLEGE

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum is broad and balanced in both key stages. Extra curricular activities enhance students' learning.
Provision for students with special educational needs	Good provision is made for students withdrawn for individual or small group attention. In many mainstream classes the individual education plans are ineffective and occasionally insufficient support staff are available.
Provision for students' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Provision for moral and social development is good, that for spiritual and cultural development is satisfactory.
How well the college cares for its students	Good pastoral support and satisfactory procedures for students' welfare. Assessment procedures work satisfactorily. The college's partnership with parents is effective; parents receive appropriate and good information.

HOW WELL THE COLLEGE IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher provides effective leadership. The overall quality of management is satisfactory. Appropriate strategies for improvement are raising standards of work and behaviour.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors know the main strengths and weaknesses, and monitor the college's development, curriculum and finances effectively.
The college's evaluation of its performance	Senior staff continually evaluate the college's performance. Monitoring is not yet effective to achieve the necessary pace of improvement.
The strategic use of resources	The college makes satisfactory use of its adequate levels of staffing, accommodation and learning resources. It satisfactorily applies the principles of best value in the acquisition and use of all its resources.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE COLLEGE

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They feel the college is well led. • Students like going to the college. • Students enjoy a very good range of extra curricular activities. • Standards in sport are good. • They feel that students make good progress. • Expectations of students have risen. • A good ethos and a caring staff provide a good environment for learning. • Resources, including provision for information technology are good. • College's public image has improved. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examinations results in both key stages. • Behaviour, of a minority of students. • Decoration of buildings. • Would like class sizes to be smaller. • Better quality of and more, homework. • More information about students' progress. • Closer partnership of parents and college.

Inspectors agree with most of parents' positive comments. However, they find that students' progress overall is satisfactory rather than good. In respect of the areas for improvement, inspectors agree that examination results are not high enough, that a minority of students misbehave and that homework is inconsistent. However, there was no evidence that class sizes or the state of decoration have any adverse impact on standards. Inspectors find that the college has already created a closer working partnership with parents in recent times and provides suitable amounts of information about students' progress.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The college's results and achievements

1. Standards of attainment overall, are below average throughout the college.
2. The profile of students' levels of attainment on entry to the college is below average. This is shown by students' prior performance in the National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 2 and by results in cognitive ability tests taken in Year 8.
3. In 1999, results in the National Curriculum tests taken by students at the age of fourteen, and in the GCSE examinations taken by students at the age of sixteen, were below the national averages for all schools, and below the national averages for schools with broadly similar intakes of students.
4. Students make satisfactory progress, relative to their earlier attainments. In many subjects, the standards of work observed in classes, were higher than those indicated by the college's overall performances in external examinations. This is partly due to the inability of many students to recall earlier work and an inconsistent use of homework to consolidate their knowledge and understanding. Results in GCSE examinations overall are slowly improving.
5. In 1999, the college was nearly two per cent short of its target of 37 per cent of students to achieve five or more passes at A*-C in GCSE examinations. For the current Year 11 this target has been set at a challenging, but realistic level of 40 per cent.
6. Taking into account the standards of students' work as observed in classes, the scrutiny of students' work and discussions held with students, overall standards at the end of both key stages are below average. Standards are higher in practical subjects such as art, music and design and technology than in subjects such as English, history and religious education, where students' generally weak standards of writing adversely affect their progress.
7. The college is aware that results in GCSE examinations are not high enough in several subjects. Since the appointment of the current headteacher just over two years ago, a number of initiatives have been introduced with the aim of raising standards to an appropriately high level for all students. Some of these measures, especially the use of the improved system of assessment to reduce underachievement and to help predict future performances, are already working. Results in GCSE examinations have greatly improved in subjects such as design and technology and art. The recent focus on improving both teaching standards and the curriculum in science at Key Stage 4, are proving successful. Results that students in Year 11 have already obtained in their GCSE modular examinations in science to date, point to a greatly improved performance at grades A*-C.
8. In 1999, the college's results in the National Curriculum tests taken at the end of Key Stage 3 were in line with the national average for all schools in mathematics and science, and well below average in English. Results in the tests in English were well below the teachers' assessments. In 1998, the college's results in these tests were in line with the national average for all schools in English and mathematics and below average in science.

9. In the four year period 1996 to 1999, the trend in the college's average points score in the National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 3, in the three core subjects of English, mathematics and science, rose in line with the national trend. During this period, boys' performances were close to the national average for boys, whereas girls' performances were below the national average for girls.

10. In comparison with schools with similar intakes, the results in the Key Stage 3 tests in 1999 were above average in mathematics, broadly average in science and well below average in English.

11. Currently, standards of work in Key Stage 3 are average in mathematics and science and below average in English. Standards of work in classes in other subjects are above average in design and technology and broadly average in all other subjects except in history and religious education where standards are below average.

12. At the end of Key Stage 4 in 1999, the proportion of students achieving the equivalent of five or more passes at grades A*-C was below the national average for all schools. The proportion achieving grades A*-G was well below the national average. In comparison with similar schools, the proportion of students gaining at least five grades A*-C was below average and the proportion gaining five grades A*-G was well below average.

13. In comparison with similar schools, the college's overall results in GCSE examinations for 1998 and 1999 were below average.

14. Performances at A*-C grades in 1999 were well above the national average in art and German, above the national average in design and technology, close to the national average in English, drama, English literature, geography and music, below average in mathematics, and well below average in science, history and French. Performances at A*-G grades, in many subjects, were broadly in line with the national average.

15. Since the previous inspection in 1995, the trend in the college's average total points' score per pupil in GCSE examinations has risen faster than the national trend. In the three year period 1997 to 1999, the rise in the score for boys was lower than the national average, and that for girls was close to the national average. The average total points score has risen from 28.8 in 1995 to 33.3 in 1999.

16. Comparing performances in GCSE examinations in 1999 with similar schools, and taking into account students' prior attainments in the National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1997, students attainments in the GCSE examinations in 1999 were below average overall. They were average in English, below in mathematics and well below in science.

17. Weak standards of writing, including spelling, grammar and punctuation adversely affect the progress of many students in many subjects.

18. Students make satisfactory progress overall. Most students make satisfactory progress in both key stages in nearly all subjects. There is a very gradual narrowing of the gap between boys' and girls' performances overall, but not in every subject.

19. Students with special educational needs make satisfactory progress in most subjects and attain standards in line with expectations predicted from their prior attainment. However, in English and geography their progress is unsatisfactory. In many subjects, teachers do not make fully effective use of the individual education plans to enhance the

learning of these students. Students with high ability make satisfactory progress overall.

20. In Key Stage 4, standards in classes are above average in art, music and design and technology, and average in most other subjects, except for English, history and religious education where they remain below average. Standards of work in the vocational courses in Key Stage 4 are below average but most students on these courses are making satisfactory progress.

21. Literacy is generally weak throughout the college and in most subjects. In several subjects, lower attaining students struggle to meet the reading demands of written instructions and worksheets and receive few opportunities to develop their reading skills by reading aloud. Most students rarely write extended pieces of work and spelling, punctuation and grammar are often inaccurate. Even where students complete extended pieces of writing, there are structural weaknesses. Students' writing often shows a limited range of expression and little fluency.

22. In a few classes some students do not listen carefully enough and call out to answer questions or during discussion while the teacher or another student is speaking. High quality debating among students in Year 11 was observed.

23. Students are improving their skills in information and communication technology and use them to enhance their work in a few subjects.

24. Students' skills in numeracy are barely satisfactory and they use their general mathematical knowledge to support their studies in various contexts across the curriculum as they progress through the college. In particular, they practise their skills in graphical and other data handling work to good effect in science, design and technology and in information technology.

25. The poor attendance of a sizeable minority of students is a major factor in the college's lower than expected performance in several subjects in external examinations, especially in Key Stage 4. The college's strategies for improving attendance are not yet succeeding. There are a few other important reasons that lead to some underachievement in a few subjects: many students and a few teachers do not have sufficiently high expectations; a large number of students are too casual in their attitude to work; a few teachers do not control the minority of students with behavioural difficulties well enough. In many subjects the quality and quantity of homework are inadequate to support students' learning effectively. There is inconsistency among departments and among teachers in setting homework to support students' learning.

26. The college is working hard to improve performance in most subjects. It has developed methods to analyse performance data and to set appropriately challenging targets for departments. The college's targets for 2000 aim for an increase in the proportion of students gaining at least five grades A*-C in GCSE examinations to 40 per cent and for the average points score per pupil to rise to 34.6. These are reasonably challenging targets; achievements for 1999 were 35.5 per cent and 33.3 respectively, but the college's data shows that the current Year 11 students have higher levels of prior attainment than the previous Year 11.

27. The college's development plan has correctly identified as some of its priorities for raising standards: the improvement of the work ethic and self-esteem of students; further improvement in standards of teaching; better attendance and the development of better standards of literacy.

Students' attitudes, values and personal development

28. The students' attitudes to college are satisfactory. The majority of students are interested in their work, and in some subjects, such as design and technology, they are very enthusiastic and well motivated. Students persevere with tasks, but often lack a sense of urgency, working at a slow but steady pace. A minority of students does not want to work. Most of these students are not disruptive, but take little part in the lessons. A few Year 11 boys, for example, who had been placed on vocational courses, made no attempt to do any work. Some students who had very negative attitudes to college are now making progress in their learning. This is due to the students' successful negotiation with the college to attend an agreed timetable of lessons and weekly work experience. Students with special educational needs respond well to the small group or individual teaching they receive when withdrawn for short periods from full classes. In their mainstream classes their attitudes to work, although satisfactory overall, depend upon how successfully the class teacher has matched the work to their individual needs.

29. The behaviour of the students is satisfactory overall, as was found at the previous inspection. The college generally operates as an orderly community. As reported at the time of the previous inspection, the behaviour in cramped corridors at lesson changes is still a safety concern. Behaviour in lessons is generally satisfactory, and sometimes good. An unsatisfactory feature is that students sometimes do not put up their hands during discussions and they call out. However, during assemblies and lunchtime, students behave well. Students say that incidents of bullying are rare. The high rate of exclusions is now falling.

30. The students' personal development is good. They have good relationships with adults working in the college, and know that they can turn to their tutors and heads of year for help and support. Students said that the college is a very friendly place, where everyone 'looks out' for each other. When they are given opportunities to work in groups, they work well together. Students are helpful and courteous and generally talk to visitors with confidence. The students show initiative by organising fund raising events, such as a fashion show arranged to support a charity. They appreciate the range of extra curricular activities and take part with enthusiasm. Students perform musical items in assemblies with confidence, and participate in a range of local sporting and musical events.

31. Procedures to improve attendance have not been totally effective, but the rate of unauthorised absence reduced in the last term. Attendance in class remains an issue. The attendance of students has been poor, and has deteriorated since the time of the last inspection. The attendance rate for 1998/9 of 86.6 per cent was well below the national average and the unauthorised absence rate of three per cent was well above the national average. Attendance rates for the first term of the current academic year have improved to nearly 90 per cent, and unauthorised absence has fallen to two per cent. A significant number of students have a very casual attitude to punctuality. On one morning of the inspection, over 80 students were late for college. In many lessons, a few students arrived late, and teaching began up to ten minutes after the official start time. Students' poor attendance and lack of punctuality has a detrimental effect on attainment and progress.

HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?

32. The overall quality of teaching is satisfactory throughout the college. This is reflected in the quality of learning. Students make satisfactory progress in the great majority of lessons. Some good teaching was observed in all subjects. A small amount of unsatisfactory teaching was seen in nearly half of all subjects.

33. A total of 183 lessons were observed during the inspection. In 93 per cent of these lessons, teaching was at least satisfactory. Teaching was judged to be good in 44 per cent of the lessons seen and very good and occasionally excellent in a further 10 per cent. These figures represent an improvement on the figures from the previous inspection when the quality of both teaching and learning were sound or better in only 75 per cent of lessons seen.

34. The quality of teaching and of learning is satisfactory in both key stages in mathematics; in English it is satisfactory at Key Stage 3 and good at Key Stage 4 and in science it is good at Key Stage 3 and satisfactory at Key Stage 4. In a few classes in each subject there were instances when teachers were slow to check the poor behaviour of a small minority of students and the learning of the rest of the class was adversely affected. Some good and very good teaching was seen in all three subjects. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen in English, but a small amount of unsatisfactory teaching occurred in mathematics in both key stages and in science in Key Stage 4.

35. The teaching in Key Stage 3 is good in design and technology, history and information technology and is satisfactory overall in all other subjects. In Key Stage 4, teaching is very good in design and technology, and good in art, information technology, music and physical education; it is satisfactory in all other subjects.

36. The proportion of good and very good teaching is higher in Key Stage 3 than in Key Stage 4 and the proportion of unsatisfactory teaching is higher in Key Stage 4.

37. Students with special educational needs receive good teaching in literacy when they are withdrawn from class to receive help, for example in improving their reading, writing and comprehension skills. They make good progress in mathematics in Key Stage 3 as they receive good support from classroom assistants. However, in many mainstream classes, when specialist or additional support is not provided, students progress less well than they should, because the work is not well matched to their needs, and teachers make insufficient use of individual education plans to set appropriate work and targets. Levels of support in class for students with behavioural difficulties are often insufficient.

38. In a minority of classes, insufficient attention is given to developing students' writing and speaking and in many subjects there is little use of extended writing to promote students' learning. A few teachers do not encourage students to develop their listening skills and in a few classes they allow students to call out answers randomly or interrupt other speakers without listening properly to what is being said.

39. The teaching of skills in numeracy is satisfactory and occurs in several subjects; it is effective in helping students improve their work in subjects such as design and technology, information technology, geography and science.

40. Most students are becoming competent and independent users of computers, but many teachers lack the confidence to create opportunities for students to use their skills in information and communication technology to enhance their learning in several subject

areas.

41. Most students display a satisfactory knowledge and understanding of their work, acquire adequate skills in most subjects and have a good awareness of what they should do to improve. The majority of students maintain their concentration and interest throughout lessons, but a few students do not show sufficient interest in their work in some subjects. A sizeable minority of students, particularly in Key Stage 4, are too casual in their attitudes to learning at times, make unsatisfactory efforts to develop their thinking and creative skills, and rarely work at a fast enough pace.

42. Standards of teaching in design and technology are a strength of the college. In this subject, teachers successfully communicate their high expectations and enthusiasm to their classes. Students respond positively to the challenging and interesting tasks set and are made aware of what they need to do to improve. Appropriately in a technology college, this department is in the forefront of raising standards; in the last year or so there has been a considerable emphasis on improving standards of teaching and learning which have led to better results in GCSE examinations, which are now above national averages. The teaching of information technology is good in both key stages.

43. The quality of teaching on the vocational courses is satisfactory. Most teachers suitably adapt to the different style of teaching, which these courses demand. The quality of learning is mainly satisfactory, though a few students behave immaturely at times. Most students, particularly in Year 11 respond well to the challenges of the tasks and have developed their independent research and organisational skills. These courses give students a good opportunity to achieve a qualification, no matter what their levels of prior attainment, provided they are prepared to complete the tasks at their own appropriate level and pace. The vocational courses are generally successful in motivating the students to raise their standards of work.

44. Teachers in all subjects are suitably qualified and have good knowledge and a secure understanding of their specialist subjects. Most teachers manage their classes effectively, have suitably high expectations for attainment and behaviour for their students, and provide tasks, which challenge the majority of the class. However, the work is sometimes inappropriate for students of the highest and of the lowest attainment within the same class.

45. Teachers use learning resources, which are generally of satisfactory quality and quantity, effectively to meet students' needs. Teachers and students make satisfactory use of the learning resource centre and benefit from the services provided by the library assistant.

46. In the lessons where teaching is good and sometimes very good, teachers use a range of appropriate techniques. They plan and organise their lessons carefully and share with the class specific objectives, which are suitably challenging and achievable by students. They present their lessons logically and clearly, work proceeds at a good pace and teachers use probing questions to check students' understanding and to build on their previous knowledge. Teachers have high expectations for all students and encourage students to think for themselves. They mark students' work thoroughly and give students clear advice on how to improve their standards. Many of the more successful lessons end with a review of the work learned and a consideration of the next steps.

47. In the lessons where the quality of teaching was judged satisfactory, several features of good teaching were present and outweighed the weaknesses. However, these

lessons contained one or more of the following shortcomings: insufficiently high expectations for all students, particularly those of below average ability; a tendency to teach to the middle range of the class; limited use of individual education plans for students with special educational needs; a lack of suitably differentiated work, a lack of pace; work set that was too easy. In a few lessons, teachers do not use all the time available and allow students to be casual in their punctuality to and from lessons.

48. The main weaknesses in the lessons where teaching or learning were judged unsatisfactory were: poor classroom control by the teacher of a minority of poorly behaved students; low expectations of both teacher and students, students' weak standards of basic literacy and oracy; lack of homework; lack of pace or challenge in much of the work set, and a poor attitude towards work by some students.

49. The previous inspection report referred to a significant amount of unsatisfactory teaching. The college's attempts to improve the standards of teaching have been successful.

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

50. The curricular provision of the college is satisfactory. Changes since the previous inspection have resulted in a more appropriate allocation of time to subjects.

51. The curriculum is good in Key Stage 3 and satisfactory in Key Stage 4. All statutory requirements of the curriculum are met at Key Stage 3. At Key Stage 4 all statutory requirements are met with one exception which is that some students do not have access to one component of design and technology. All subjects have appropriate schemes of work and suitable time allocations to teach the national curriculum.

52. The curriculum provides good access to all students. The choices available to students in Key Stage 4 include provision for work-based learning through a satisfactory range of vocational subjects, which are mostly taken by students of lower attainment. All students participate in a good programme of work experience during Key Stage 4.

53. Schemes of work are suitably detailed and contain all the requirements of the National Curriculum programmes of study and appropriate external examination syllabuses. For the most part, due account is made of students' prior attainments to achieve suitable continuity and progression, but insufficient reference by many teachers to the individual education plans of students with special educational needs slows the overall progress of these students.

54. Homework is not used regularly and effectively to reinforce students' learning in all subjects. The quality and amount of homework set are unsatisfactory in Key Stage 3, but satisfactory in Key Stage 4 where the requirements of coursework for GCSE examinations are a motivating factor for teachers and students alike.

55. All students follow a well-planned course of personal and social education. This includes education about drug mis-use, sex education and health education. Outside organisations work in partnership with the college in the delivery of parts of this programme. Students benefit from the programme of work and understand the topics covered. This programme makes a useful contribution to the personal development of students.

56. Currently courses in vocational education are mainly provided for students of below

average attainment in Key Stage 4. Standards achieved are broadly in line with expectations from students' prior attainments. The college teaches the courses for the City and Guilds Diploma for Vocational Education (foundation level) in health and social care, and in leisure and tourism, as one of the options for students in Key Stage 4. These courses suit to the needs of the students and satisfactorily develop their key skills of communication, application of number, information technology and problem solving. The programmes have a positive impact on students' knowledge and understanding of citizenship. Students were observed making appointments to visit a local nursery, and others were learning how to present both sides of the argument on topics such as abortion and animal testing.

57. The college has recently introduced a vocational studies programme to meet the individual needs of a few students who wish to follow a less academic career path. Students benefit from the valuable opportunities to gain key skills and to undertake one day a week of work experience.

58. The provision for careers education is good and the college has established very good links with the careers advisers, who visit the college to interview students and provide advice. The work in careers education is carefully planned and students are well informed about the range of options open to them. Work experience in Year 10 contributes significantly to the preparation of the students for the next stage of their lives. The careers co-ordinator organises sessions for parents to learn about careers education and these attract a good response.

59. Links with middle schools and Exeter College provide good continuity of work between schools. The college ensures that as students enter further education, they are fully aware of courses available.

60. The college provides a wide range of extra-curricular activities and this is a strength. Sports teams compete regularly with other schools in a wide range of sports. Visits, including foreign destinations, are organised and a good range of opportunities within the arts is provided. Additional classes in a wide range of subjects are offered to students and there is a good response to this provision.

61. The college's partnership with the community is good, and is a major strength. These links have a positive impact on students' attainment and personal development. Students' learning was enhanced, for example, when five university engineering students worked with them in technology lessons and when the lighting director from a local theatre conducted a workshop with drama students. The very good links with local employers help students to prepare for the world of work and life after college. Students benefit when some local business representatives give useful insights into employment through their role as industrial mentors, as part of the personal and social educational programme. Some teachers undertake work placements, which are beneficial to their teaching of work-related issues. The college works hard to encourage the local community to come into college. There has been a good response to the information technology classes for members of the public. The college has embarked on various beneficial building ventures, which encourage dual use of sports facilities. Staff gain valuable experience through working with local schools.

62. The provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of its students is satisfactory. Good guidance to staff, giving definitions of 'spiritual', 'moral', 'social' and 'cultural', enables them to identify areas of the curriculum which can contribute to development in each of these areas. An audit is taken by senior management that enables the college to evaluate the effectiveness of its provision.

63. Provision for the spiritual development of students is satisfactory. Significant contributions are made by religious education, English, and drama where students learn how to examine beliefs and values and express feelings and emotions. The English department has guidance for teachers through their document 'Raising the Spiritual Dimension'. Not enough opportunities are given for quiet reflection across the college. Weekly assemblies are positive occasions but the emphasis is on moral and social development. Opportunities are rarely taken in tutor periods to make a contribution to spiritual development.

64. Provision for students' moral development is good. Students have clear guidelines for behaviour and heads of year play a significant role in ensuring moral standards are upheld. The college plans to extend the contribution made by the personal and social education course to the moral education of students.

65. The college's provision for social development of its students is good. Students work well together in group and paired work in many subjects. Lessons in religious education, personal and social education, English and physical education in particular encourage students to work together and appreciate each others' skills and abilities. Students consider issues of citizenship and controversial moral and ethical issues in many subjects. The wide range of extra-curricular activities makes a significant contribution to students' social skills, as for example in the organisation of events to support charities or by participation in team games.

66. The provision for the cultural development of students is satisfactory. Students experience different cultural dimensions not available outside the college and enhance their learning through the good cultural experiences provided in work in class or through extra-curricular activities in English, religious education, drama, music, food technology and modern foreign languages. The multi-cultural provision is not as well developed but religious education, modern languages and humanities give some useful opportunities for exploring other cultures.

67. Students attend one assembly each week. The assemblies are generally good quality experiences for them. Students are involved in taking these assemblies and a group play musical instruments whilst students assemble. However, as at the time of the previous inspection, the college does not meet statutory requirements to provide all students with a collective act of worship each day.

HOW WELL DOES THE COLLEGE CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?

68. The educational and personal support and guidance that the college provides for its students are good. The college is effective in providing a supportive and caring community for its students. The pastoral system provides good support for student's personal welfare, and heads of year are very committed in their role of caring for their students. Most of the adults working in the college are approachable and know the students well. Parents and students praised the high standard of arrangements for transfer and induction of Year 8 students. Students with special educational needs receive good support when withdrawn from class to receive specialist help. In many classes they receive good assistance from

the additional teacher or learning support assistant, but in other classes teachers do not always provide work of an appropriate level.

69. The college has satisfactory procedures to ensure students' welfare, health and safety. Arrangements for child protection are satisfactory. The college has adopted the local education authority's policy and is in the process of drafting a college policy. The issue raised in the last report has been addressed, and the designated member of staff has had training. Heads of year attend case conferences, but there is no regular in-service training for staff. No members of staff are formally qualified in first aid, but a good number have received basic training. Students who are ill or injured are given good care and attention by staff. The first aid room, which is used as an additional staff kitchen, is not satisfactory for treating and caring for students who become ill. The college's health and safety policy is not specific to the college. Governors undertake a termly audit of the premises, and the staff pay due attention to reducing hazards. Most of the health and safety issues raised in the last report have been addressed, but students' behaviour in crowded corridors is still a concern. A number of health and safety issues were brought to the attention of the college during the inspection, including the urgent need to test portable electrical appliances.

70. The outcomes of the college's procedures for monitoring and improving attendance are unsatisfactory. The college has worked hard to monitor and improve the poor attendance rates, but measures are not yet effective. Although the attendance rates show signs of improvement last term, they are still below the 92 per cent threshold. Tutors work with individual students and set targets for rates of attendance. Parents are regularly reminded of the importance of encouraging their children to attend college. The college's procedures for monitoring and promoting punctuality are ineffective, and some students drift into college and lessons.

71. The college's procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour are satisfactory. The current behaviour policy is under review. The ethos of good behaviour is reinforced in lessons and by the example of staff working in the college. Teachers reward good behaviour through the merit system. Students who become disruptive in lessons are removed to the 'contingency' room, but certain departments are using this too frequently. The college is following the local authority's anti-bullying policy and is in the final stages of formulating its own policy. Parents and students say that any bullying is dealt with quickly and effectively.

72. Procedures for assessing students' attainment and progress are satisfactory. The college has improved its data bank and analysis records and now has a good range of assessment documents giving details and a comprehensive analysis of examination results. These are compared with the results of cognitive ability tests and other assessment data and the college effectively uses this information to monitor its GCSE results and attainment trends within the college and over a number of years. Several departments make good use of this information but other departments make insufficient use of the assessment data to assist their teaching programme.

73. The college's procedures to monitor and support students' academic progress are good. Departments monitor students' progress, and helpful information in the form of interim reports is prepared by subject teachers to alert tutors and parents of areas of concern. Students' annual reports do not often contain clear and focused academic targets to show students how to improve their work. Monitoring of students who are not achieving their best is not yet effective throughout the college. The college has worked hard with students who do not like school, and has achieved success with some students. Staff have

negotiated with students to come into college for some lessons and to undertake weekly work placement.

74. The use of assessment details and analysis to guide future planning of the curriculum is satisfactory. Each department has access to the college statistical analysis data. Teachers are able to compare their own subject performance with that of others for the same students and can compile targets for their subject for individual students.

75. The quality of marking is variable within and across departments, but many marks are accompanied by positive comments that give students clear targets for improvement. Students express satisfaction with the way in which their work is marked. They feel they are given clear targets for improvement especially at Key Stage 4.

HOW WELL DOES THE COLLEGE WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

76. The college has effective links with parents and provides them with good quality information. Newsletters are of a very good standard, and inform parents of future events and celebrate the college's successes. The parents of new students are well informed through a useful prospectus and meetings at the college.

77. At the time of the last inspection, parents were unhappy about the lack of consultation evenings with subject teachers. The college now invites parents to two consultation evenings per year (one with tutors and one with subject teachers), and these provide valuable opportunities for parents to discuss their children's progress.

78. Reports to parents are satisfactory. The college has recently introduced useful interim progress reports, which highlight strengths and areas of concern. However, reports in a few subjects do not focus on what students know, understand and can do in those subjects. All reports comment clearly and effectively on students' attitudes, values and behaviour. The college sends parents of students in Year 8 and Year 10 helpful targets for national curriculum levels. Students' annual reports to parents do not always give clear and focussed information about how students can improve their work, although there is good practice in some departments. The college sends parents high quality information about the topics their children will be studying, and parents of Year 9 students receive good information about the options available at the next stage of education.

79. The impact of parents' involvement on the work of the college is satisfactory. The parents, teachers and friends association has developed from an effective fundraising body, to a useful 'sounding board' on college policies. The college values this involvement of parents in the life of the college. Parents also make valuable contributions through the governing body, and helping with sports clubs and outdoor pursuits. Parents are regularly asked to take part in 'OFSTED' style questionnaires, and the published results show that parents feel the college is improving. The home/college agreement is well established. Many parents view and sign the contact book, but the potential of the books for a quick, direct communication between teachers and parents is not fully exploited.

HOW WELL IS THE COLLEGE LED AND MANAGED?

80. The college has a generally positive, friendly ethos and a suitable environment for purposeful work.

81. The quality of leadership provided by the headteacher and governing body is good. The overall quality of management throughout the college is satisfactory. The college

recently satisfied the criteria set for it to continue into the second phase of its development as a technology college.

82. The college benefits from the effective leadership of the headteacher. Since his appointment just over two years ago there have been some important improvements in the management and organisation of the college and a raising of the college's standing in the local community. He is well supported by the governing body and members of the senior management team, who share a realistic awareness of the college's strengths and its key areas for development. Together, they provide a clear educational direction, while creating a more open and participative style of management.

83. The college's procedures for teachers and governors to evaluate and plan for improvement are mostly good. A deputy head oversees the collection, analysis and use of assessment data. These are used with increasing effectiveness to raise the expectations of both teachers and students, and departments are encouraged to aim for their "challenge" target rather than their "comfort" one.

84. The college has made satisfactory progress in implementing its action plan from the previous inspection and works closely with the local education authority in a programme for college improvement.

85. A few of the recent changes have already had a positive impact in raising standards and expectations in a few subject areas, but progress in other subjects, notably science at Key Stage 4 is slower. However, there were signs during the inspection that the concentrated efforts to improve the teaching, assessment and curriculum for science were beginning to succeed. Attempts to improve levels of attendance have not succeeded; there is a little progress in meeting the aims of raising students' self-esteem but there remains a large task ahead to alter the attitudes of the sizeable minority of students who have an over casual approach to their work.

86. Suitable systems are in place to monitor and evaluate performance across an appropriate range of the college's work. Close working links with the local education authority's advisory officers are developing well. These links are helping to raise standards, as seen for example, in the effective support provided during the last year or so to improve teaching and learning in science at Key Stage 4.

87. Governors carry out their duties effectively. They consult the student representatives regularly and a few students attend the meetings of the governors' committee for Students and Personnel. Students feel that their views are carefully noted and acted upon. The head boy and head girl were impressed when the chairman of governors acceded to a request to tour the toilet areas with them, which has resulted in plans for improvements in these areas.

88. The roles of the senior management team are now clearly and suitably defined. Nevertheless the management structure which was inherited by the current headteacher is unwieldy and unbalanced, containing the inappropriately large number of five deputy heads.

89. The quality of leadership in curricular areas is satisfactory overall; it is very good in English, and good in a few subjects such as modern foreign languages and design and technology. Most heads of department organise their departments well and monitor the quality of teaching and learning well. This has led to improvements in students' standards of work. The heads of year make a valuable contribution to the pastoral and academic

development of students.

90. There is a rolling programme of reviews of subject departments effectively undertaken by the senior management team. In cases where a serious weakness is evident, as in the recent poor achievements in science at Key Stage 4, outside support of an appropriate nature is brought in quickly. These reviews have had a generally positive impact on teaching and learning in several subjects, most notably in design and technology. Helpful discussions about past and future performances take place early in the college year, between all subject departments and their senior management team line manager.

91. Systems of communication within the college are satisfactory. Regular meetings are held at all management levels. Most teachers have a good understanding of what the college is trying to achieve.

92. The current college development plan suitably identifies how the college can move forward and contains generally appropriate ambitions. Responsibilities, costs and success criteria are clearly defined and there is a good emphasis on the monitoring of teaching and learning. The programme for INSET is linked to the needs of the college or departmental development plans and to the professional development of individual teachers.

93. The college's day-to-day organisation and administration are good and are efficient and effective. Statutory requirements relating to students' entitlement to subjects in the curriculum are met apart from making the appropriate provision for the teaching of aspects of control technology to some students in Key Stage 4.

94. The college does not fully meet requirements for teaching control technology to students following the food technology course at Key Stage 4.

95. Arrangements for ensuring health and safety are generally appropriate, but there is a need to ensure that all portable electrical appliances are regularly checked for safety.

96. The college has the capacity to build further on its improvements of recent years.

97. The college manages its budget of around £2.7 million effectively. Decisions are taken in accordance with the college's educational objectives. Funds allocated to the college for a specific purpose, such as provision for its development as a technology college are properly spent. Governors exercise careful oversight of the college's finances, staffing provision and appointments. Procedures for planning, monitoring and evaluating expenditure are generally appropriate. The most recent audit of the college's finances indicated that financial management was good. The college has managed to turn round the deficit of around £300,000 that was present two years ago to a current surplus. To do this the college had to proceed with a programme of staffing reviews and consequent redundancies. This very difficult situation was sensitively and effectively managed.

98. The college has made satisfactory progress in dealing with the nine key issues identified in its last inspection report. The curriculum has been reviewed; it now makes appropriate provision and balance to ensure that the National Curriculum subjects are suitably taught. There have been recent improvements in subjects identified as weak at the last inspection. Satisfactory progress has been made in tackling the relative underachievement of boys. The college has appropriately concentrated its efforts in trying to raise standards of both boys and girls. Procedures to improve attendance have not been totally effective, but the rate of unauthorised absence reduced in the last term. Attendance

in class remains an issue. The college has tried hard to improve standards of behaviour, and with partial success. Students generally like the system of rewards for good behaviour and understand and accept the sanctions for poor behaviour. Homework is still often insufficiently demanding and it is inconsistently set, within and across subjects. Health and safety issues were generally met, but the corridors are still overcrowded at times despite the implementation of a one-way system on the stairs and remain a potential hazard.

99. The student to teacher ratio and average class sizes are at least satisfactory overall. The amount of the budget allocated to spending on books and other learning materials is above average and the college has adequate resources. The number of staff and their range of qualifications and experience are adequate to teach the college's curriculum. Although there is an adequate number of support staff generally for students with special educational needs, most of the support is given by withdrawing students from lessons. This means that the level of support in literacy and numeracy is good but there is sometimes a need for more support within the subject departments. An example of this is in history, where the level of support is insufficient and a few students fail to maintain good levels of concentration.

100. There is a well-documented policy for staff development and the college has been successful in gaining the Investors in People award since the last inspection. The senior management team monitors teaching very well, monitoring is less effective at departmental level. Procedures for the induction of new staff and newly qualified teachers are effective and the college participates in the initial training of teachers. The non-teaching staff are fully included in the staff development process.

101. The college makes generally good use of its available accommodation and learning resources. Satisfactory use is made of the time available for teaching. The casual attitude of a minority of students towards punctuality to lessons reduces the amount of effective teaching time in some lessons.

102. The college has adequate accommodation; it is very good in design and technology and information technology, and good in mathematics and modern foreign languages. The accommodation for art has not been improved since the last inspection. Although there are a few deficiencies in other parts of the accommodation, these do not have a significantly adverse impact on standards.

103. The provision of resources for learning is satisfactory in all departments. It is good in many, such as mathematics, design and technology and modern foreign languages. Resources for information technology are good and the number of computers, in relation to the number of students, is above the national average. There is poor access to computers and a lack of appropriate software in religious education and art. The computers in the music department are old and in need of updating. The provision of books is at least satisfactory in all subjects. There is a lack of textbooks in the central library for science and religious education.

104. The college applies the principles of best value in the use of all its resources. It exercises good initiative in acquiring services that provide good value at a competitive price and measures its educational gains against its spending.

WHAT SHOULD THE COLLEGE DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

105. The college's development planning has already identified nearly all of the contents of the key issues listed below as areas to be targeted for improvement. The only item that currently does not feature as strongly in the college's plans is the issue of students' casual attitudes towards punctuality.

- (1) Take further action to raise standards of attainment in public examinations by:
(Paragraphs: 3, 6, 7, 9, 164, 165, 172, 181, 191, 193, 208)
 - Intensifying efforts to counteract the underachievement of students in some subjects identified in this report and particularly in English at Key Stage 3 and in science and mathematics at Key Stage 4;
(Paragraphs: 8, 10, 11, 12, 16, 106, 107, 116, 123, 135)
 - Improving students' skills in oracy and literacy, particularly in writing, and developing their use across all subjects;
(Paragraphs: 17, 21, 38, 109, 115, 116, 166, 173, 177, 194, 195, 200, 217)
 - improving the provision and quality of homework for all students.
(Paragraphs: 4, 25, 48, 54, 98, 113, 128, 143, 169, 178, 199, 205)

- (2) Reduce the amount of unsatisfactory teaching and increase the proportion of good teaching by:
(Paragraphs: 32, 34, 36, 218)
 - raising the expectations of those few teachers who currently underestimate the potential achievements of students;
(Paragraphs: 25, 47, 48, 168, 169)
 - sharing existing good practice more effectively and encouraging the use of a wider range of teaching approaches within departments and across the college;
(Paragraphs: 48, 72, 152, 156, 169, 170, 178, 179, 181, 186, 199, 204, 212)
 - providing work of suitable challenge for students of all levels of prior attainment within each class.
(Paragraphs: 37, 44, 47, 48, 113, 146, 159, 164, 169, 170, 176, 178, 203, 205, 216, 218)

- (3) Improve the provision for students with special educational needs by:
(Paragraphs: 53, 99, 173)
 - ensuring that individual education plans contain clear targets for improvement in all subjects and are suitably implemented and frequently monitored within all subjects;
(Paragraphs: 37, 111, 187)
 - making all teachers aware of the need to provide work of a suitably challenging but attainable level for these individual students in mainstream classes;
(Paragraphs: 19, 28, 68, 111, 164)
 - providing suitable training for the few teachers who have difficulty in controlling students who have behavioural difficulties.
(Paragraph: 141)

- (4) Continue to raise standards of behaviour in classes and reduce the current high level of temporary exclusions by:
(Paragraphs: 37, 71, 98, 196, 198, 204)
- continuing to develop strategies aimed at raising students' self-esteem;
(Paragraphs: 25, 28, 43, 71, 85, 141, 188)
 - encouraging students to have positive attitudes to their work and behaviour;
(Paragraphs: 4, 28, 48, 85, 101, 118, 128, 142, 168, 176, 188, 211, 217)
 - ensuring that all teachers have suitably high and realistic expectations of behaviour from students and are consistent in their classroom management.
(Paragraphs: 22, 25, 34, 176)
- (5) Raise levels of attendance in all years, particularly in Key Stage 4, and improve students' standards of punctuality to college and to lessons.
(Paragraphs: 25, 31, 70, 85, 98, 101, 108, 126, 135)

In addition to the Key Issues above, the following less important weaknesses should be considered for inclusion in the action plan:

- Increase the use of information and communication technology across the curriculum;
(Paragraphs: 103, 129, 143, 160, 186, 187, 191, 192, 210)
- Meet statutory requirements for the provision of daily collective worship.
(Paragraph: 67)
- Ensure that all portable electrical appliances are safe and tested regularly.
(Paragraphs: 69, 95)
- Make arrangements for control technology to be taught within food technology.
(Paragraphs: 94, 191)

PART C: COLLEGE DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	183
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	53

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	10	43	40	7	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 college's students

Students on the college's roll	Y8 – Y11
Number of students on the college's roll	1191
Number of full-time students eligible for free school meals	167

Special educational needs	Y8 – Y11
Number of students with statements of special educational needs	21
Number of students on the college's special educational needs register	278

English as an additional language	No of students
Number of students with English as an additional language	9

Student mobility in the last college year	No of students
Students who joined the college other than at the usual time of first admission	25
Students who left the college other than at the usual time of leaving	34

Attendance

Authorised absence	%
College data	10.4
National comparative data	7.9

Unauthorised absence	%
College data	3.0
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 students in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
		1999	149	130

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	55	85	73
	Girls	75	75	67
	Total	130	160	140
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	College	47 (68)	59 (55)	52 (50)
	National	63 (65)	62 (60)	55 (56)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	College	16 (30)	33 (34)	14 (15)
	National	28 (35)	38 (36)	23 (27)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	84	95	70
	Girls	99	96	65
	Total	183	191	135
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	College	68 (60)	70 (72)	50 (65)
	National	64 (62)	64 (64)	60 (62)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	College	31 (24)	36 (29)	13 (22)
	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	142	148	290

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of students achieving the standard specified	Boys	36	112	129
	Girls	67	126	141
	Total	103	238	270
Percentage of students achieving the standard specified	College	36 (33)	82 (86)	93 (95)
	National	46 (45)	91 (90)	96 (95)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	College	33.3 (33.8)
	National	37.8 (36.8)

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

Vocational qualifications	Number	% success rate
Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those students who achieved all those they studied	College	71
	National	
		76
		N/A

Ethnic background of students

	No of students
Black – Caribbean heritage	1
Black – African heritage	1
Black – other	2
Indian	0
Pakistani	2
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	1172
Any other minority ethnic group	13

Exclusions in the last college 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	147	7
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y8 – Y11]

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	67.4
Number of students per qualified teacher	17.65

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y8 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	15
Total aggregate hours worked per week	396

Deployment of teachers: Y8 – Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	73.6
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Average teaching group size: Y8 – Y11

Key Stage 3	25.5
Key Stage 4	22.3

Financial information

Financial year	1998/1999
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	£
Total income	2 728 596
Total expenditure	2 601 845
Expenditure per pupil	2 231
Balance brought forward from previous year	(27 410)
Balance carried forward to next year	99 341

Figures in parenthesis indicate negative values

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1191
Number of questionnaires returned	121

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes college.	35	59	5	2	0
My child is making good progress in college.	38	52	7	1	2
Behaviour in the college is good.	23	50	19	2	5
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	25	49	19	5	2
The teaching is good.	31	55	4	1	8
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	31	45	20	1	3
I would feel comfortable about approaching the college with questions or a problem.	46	42	6	2	3
The college expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	60	31	6	1	2
The college works closely with parents.	27	42	22	2	6
The college is well led and managed.	42	50	3	1	3
The college is helping my child become mature and responsible.	34	52	9	1	3
The college provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	55	31	4	1	9

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

ENGLISH

106. Standards of attainment at Key Stage 4 are below national levels and at Key Stage 3 they are well below.

107. At the end of Key Stage 3, levels of attainment, measured by National Curriculum test results for 1999, are well below national averages and well below average results achieved by schools with similar backgrounds. Results in mathematics and science for 1999 were in line with national averages but in the two previous years English results have been higher. Over the three previous years both girls and boys have improved their performance against national figures. The overall difference at the college between boys' and girls' achievement in English is less marked than it is nationally.

108. At the end of Key Stage 4, levels of attainment in English, measured by the 1999 GCSE results for English and English literature, were well below national averages but in line with results obtained by schools with similar backgrounds. These results were better than those achieved in mathematics and science. In media studies, where the levels of entry are particularly high, GCSE results for 1999 are in line with those for English. Similar results in all three core subjects were achieved in the previous two years. The poor attendance of a minority of students, particularly in Key Stage 4 has a detrimental impact on overall standards.

109. By the end of Key Stage 3, speaking and listening skills often remain low. Many students are inclined to shout out during class discussions, which lowers the quality of debate and discourages the participation of quieter students, who are consequently less likely to develop their own speaking skills. In reading even lower attaining students are able to follow a sustained narrative. Students understand and respond to all kinds of literature and non-literary texts. There are good examples of students writing about advertising, composing poems and stories and demonstrating how bias may be used to influence the message conveyed in writing. Students write well from the points of view of fictional characters, as seen in writing about Ray Bradbury's short story, 'The Fruit at the Bottom of the Jar', and Seamus Heaney's poem, 'Early Purges'. Work is generally well presented at all attainment levels. From Year 8 to Year 9 students make progress in writing skills, employing better handwriting, more varied sentence structures and a wider range of expression. However, standards are generally below average.

110. By the end of Key Stage 4, students are able to express themselves more effectively when talking in class. They analyse demanding modern and pre-twentieth century literature, as seen when Year 11 students discussed meaning and form in John Clare's poem, 'First Love'. They make good use in their work of information and communication technology and drafting and re-drafting techniques. Middle-attaining students in Years 10 and 11 write lively and imaginative short stories.

111. Students with special educational needs make unsatisfactory progress overall in both key stages. Students who are withdrawn for short periods from mainstream classes to receive specialist support in reading and writing are well taught and achieve well. Those students who have high levels of additional support make good progress in developing their literacy skills. However, many students with learning difficulties often do not receive sufficiently differentiated work in the mainstream mixed ability classes. The targets on their individual education plans are mostly too general.

112. Students are generally well motivated and engage fully with classroom tasks and activities. They present their work carefully and they respect other students' work when it is displayed in classrooms or corridors. They collaborate effectively in small groups. Key Stage 4 students remain focused on their task when working without close supervision. They are often willing to volunteer for additional responsibility, for example participating in the paired reading scheme for lower college students. Relationships with staff are invariably positive and friendly. Students are often enthusiastic in class discussions. They are usually able to sustain concentration on their work throughout lessons but a minority of them lack interest and are inattentive and restless.

113. Teaching and learning are satisfactory at Key Stage 3 and good at Key Stage 4. There is no unsatisfactory teaching and in three fifths of lessons teaching is good or better. There is some very good teaching in the department. In the best lessons teachers clearly state learning objectives at the outset, to enable students to focus their efforts. The caring philosophy of teachers in the department increases students' motivation and minimises problems of bad behaviour. Teachers' good classroom management is based upon expectations of high standards from students. Teachers generally choose challenging and engaging learning activities and materials. The pace of lessons is brisk, encourages students to stay involved and helps them to make progress. In less successful lessons, teachers sometimes tolerate poor behaviour such as shouting out answers. The frequency and quality of homework are insufficient. Best use is not always made of the final minutes of the lesson to review and consolidate students' progress. In many lessons, even those which are otherwise successful, insufficient thought is given to alternative or additional tasks and learning materials, which would focus more directly on the needs of the lowest attaining and highest attaining students in mixed ability groups.

114. An innovative head of department generates enthusiasm throughout the department and teachers share a common vision of English teaching. There is a good blend of new and experienced staff. Schemes of work are well balanced to provide continuity and progression but have insufficient emphasis on the learning of students with special educational needs so that tasks and materials are not always appropriate for students of all attainment levels. A weekly drama lesson for all Key Stage 3 students broadens their studies. At Key Stage 4, the course in media studies, backed by a well-equipped media suite and supporting technician, is a valuable addition to the curriculum and a very popular options choice. Supported by a departmental suite of fifteen personal computers, information and communications technology is widely used by students throughout the department, though it is not yet formally embedded in the English curriculum. Procedures for assessment and monitoring of students' progress are good. Effective use is made of assessment data to plan teaching strategies for raising standards. Student reviews and target setting are increasingly part of the assessment process. The department has excellent television and video resources.

115. Across the curriculum, levels of literacy are below average. There is little evidence of widespread enthusiasm for personal reading amongst middle and lower attaining students. Standards of reading are generally low. Although students are encouraged to read aloud in geography and there is some reading aloud in science, in other subjects opportunities for reading are limited. In geography, mathematics, social education and design and technology there are occasions when reading materials are too difficult for weaker readers to cope with. In religious education, students lack confidence in their reading, although standards are better in Key Stage 4. .

116. Standards of writing are also below average. There are few opportunities for extended writing in mathematics, science, modern foreign languages, geography or design and technology. Levels of accuracy in writing are generally good in design and technology and for higher attaining students in history, and they are satisfactory in modern foreign languages. Amongst middle attaining students in history, standards are often below average. The last inspection identified teachers as having low expectations of students, allowing them to waste time in lessons and making excessive use of praise. These problems have now been resolved. Poor presentation, observed then, has greatly improved and teachers are working hard through their marking to improve the weak spelling of many students, which was also noted. The underachievement of boys has been rectified. However, more needs still to be done to raise the standard of speaking and listening in the classroom and to ensure higher standards in Key Stage 3 National Curriculum tests.

Drama

117. Attainment in drama is in line with national standards at both key stages. In 1999, the number of students gaining grades A*-C in the GCSE examinations was at the national average level. Standards of work in lessons similarly reflect national levels of achievement.

118. At Key Stage 3, students are generally well motivated about their work in drama. They collaborate effectively in small groups, although a small number of Year 8 students are a little immature in their attitude to work. In improvised scenes, students show some awareness of dramatic structure and form. They gain the confidence to acquire basic performance skills in representations of character and narrative. They become familiar with stage conventions and learn about the history of theatre.

119. In the Key Stage 4 GCSE options group, students develop performance, staging and evaluation skills through extended tasks which require them to work independently and collaboratively. They work with scripted and improvised material and are required to produce and stage a final polished performance for assessment. Although within the group there is a wide range of attainment evident in work produced, students support one another well. Higher attaining students produce some outstanding performances, as could be seen when the present Year 11 group worked on their performance of scenes from 'A Midsummer Night's Dream'.

120. The quality of teaching and the quality of learning are good overall. The department is well led. Schemes of work are thoughtfully produced and progressive, Teachers within the department are enthusiastic. Drama clubs at both key stages are well supported and there are regular productions by drama students. Examination results are carefully analysed and strategies put in place to help raise standards. The department benefits greatly from a purpose built theatre.

MATHEMATICS

121. Standards of attainment are broadly in line with the national average at Key Stage 3 and below the national average at Key Stage 4.

122. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is close to the national average for both boys and girls. In the National Curriculum tests in mathematics for 14 year olds, taken in 1998 and in 1999, students' overall results were in line with the national average. In 1999, results in these tests were above the average for schools with similar intakes. Since 1995, results have increased in line with the national average and results at the college are closer to the national average than is the case in English or Science.

123. Students' attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is below the national average. The percentage of students gaining a pass in the subject at GCSE examinations is marginally below the national average, but the percentage of students gaining a higher grade (A*-C) is well below the national average. Girls achieve higher standards than boys at GCSE examinations. Since 1995, the proportions of students gaining a pass at grades A*-C and of those gaining any pass in the subject, have increased at a rate above the national average. Students' achieve lower results in their GCSE mathematics examinations than in nearly all other subjects.

124. Work in class and in exercise books reflects the national average in Key Stage 3 for both boys and girls. Higher attaining students have sound mathematical knowledge and are able to apply their skills to a wide range of situations, working independently. Middle attaining students work at the national average level, whilst those of low attainment achieve higher standards than is to be expected. Students with special educational needs benefit from good additional support and make good progress.

125. At Key Stage 4, standards in class work and work in students' books are just below the national average. Most students are competent in the full range of skills required for the GCSE courses they follow. However, a sizeable minority of students, mainly of below average attainment, lack sufficient competence and confidence in their mathematical work, either because their frequent absences lead to lack of continuity and practice, or occasionally, because they do not apply themselves fully to the work. The work of those students of low ability, who attend college regularly, exceeds the expected level. Boys and girls reach similar standards in class. Students with special educational needs make satisfactory progress, although slower than at Key Stage 3 because they do not have any in-class additional support.

126. Students' attainment in mathematics is below average when they enter the college. Progress of both boys and girls during Key Stage 3 is mostly good and, as shown in the results in national tests for 14 year olds, attainment rises to the national average. This good level of progress drops to unsatisfactory overall at Key Stage 4, where the impact of a small amount of unsatisfactory teaching, poor attendance and the casual attitudes of a minority of students, causes standards to fall well below average. The low level of attendance, of a sizeable minority of students of all levels of attainment in Key Stage 4, hinders their progress and in recent years has been a handicap in raising the department's overall achievements in GCSE examinations.

127. At Key Stage 3, students make a satisfactory response to lessons although a few incidences of students not settling to work do occur. This situation is similar at Key Stage 4. Poor response occurs where unsatisfactory behaviour is not checked quickly by teachers. The vast majority of exercise books are well cared for and most students take care to ensure that work is well presented. Overall, students respond satisfactorily to mathematics although many, especially in Key Stage 4, display unjustifiably low levels of confidence in their mathematical abilities. In both key stages, lateness to lessons reduces the amount of teaching time available, with a consequent reduction in learning.

128. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall at both key stages, with small amounts of both very good and unsatisfactory teaching. Teaching was good or better in ten of the nineteen lessons seen. It was unsatisfactory in one lesson in each key stage. The proportion of unsatisfactory teaching has decreased since the inspection of 1995. The best teaching features good use of resources, especially time; making students fully aware of the aims of lessons; demanding but realistic expectations of students; marking which is more than superficial and keeps students fully on task. Unsatisfactory teaching features

unchecked, unacceptable behaviour; unproductive use of time; insufficient homework of suitable quality or amount, marking which does not give direction for the future, and undemanding expectations of students.

129. The department is competently managed and benefits from its good links with the senior management team. However, difficulties over a lengthy period of time, in filling the post of deputy head of department have resulted in developments progressing at a slower than expected rate. A process of monitoring teaching and learning is in place and this is satisfactorily used to identify and disseminate good teaching practice. Although the use of information technology features in the schemes of work for the mathematics department, there is insufficient current usage to have a significant impact on raising standards of achievement.

130. Students generally have appropriate skills in numeracy, relative to their age and prior attainment. This means that they can usually meet and at times exceed the demands made on their mathematical skills in all curricular subjects. They draw and interpret graphs well in science, information technology and design and technology; they apply their measuring skills to good effect in several subjects including science; they use their knowledge of geometry and their skills in measurement effectively in the construction of 3-dimensional solids in design and technology; they display confidence and competence in basic arithmetical calculations.

131. Some improvements have occurred since the previous inspection: the quality of teaching has improved; more time is now allocated to mathematics teaching; standards of numeracy in the college have risen and no longer restrict access to other areas of the curriculum. Although not all students are as yet fully competent with algebra, it is no longer a major weakness within mathematics.

SCIENCE

132. Standards of attainment at Key Stage 4 are below average and at Key Stage 3 they are in line with national averages.

133. On entry to the college, the students' previous attainment in science is well below average for schools nationally.

134. In 1999, at the end of Key Stage 3, the percentage of students reaching level 5 and above, in National Curriculum standard tests was close to the national average, compared with all schools, and with similar schools. The percentage of students reaching level 6 and above was below the average for all schools. In 1999, there was no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls. During the period 1996 to 1999, although below the national average, students' performance mirrored and, in 1999, showed an upward trend towards the national average. Boys and girls achievements were below their respective national averages by broadly similar amounts. During the same period, compared to other core subjects in the college, both boys and girls performed better in mathematics, but not as well in English.

135. Since the previous inspection there has been concern about GCSE results in the subject. Approximately 90 per cent of the year group are normally entered for examination. In 1999, compared to all schools, the results were very low. The trend from 1996 to 1999 was downwards; 22 per cent achieving A*-C in 1996, and 19 per cent in both 1997 and 1998. Results already obtained by the current Year 11 in their modular examinations indicate higher standards of attainment than those achieved in recent years. In both 1998

and 1999, girls achieved better than boys. Students achieved better results in both English and mathematics than in science. Poor attendance of students is a contributory factor to the department's recent record of underachievement at GCSE examinations.

136. Lesson observations and a scrutiny of their work shows that the attainment of students at the end of Key Stage 3 is average. This judgement is very close to the results of National Curriculum tests. Higher attaining students in Year 8 construct and test model bridge structures and are able to calculate the efficiency of their construction, in relation to value for money in the use of materials. Middle attaining students are aware of the necessity of both plant and animal life to adapt in order to survive, and know that there is a numerical relationship, which can be expressed, using a line graph, between predators and prey. Lower attainers enjoy making and testing bridges made from paper sheet, and can explain the meaning of tension, torsion and compression. Year 9 higher attaining students show confidence and skill in the handling of apparatus and accuracy in the reading of meters as they investigate the strength of an electromagnet. They are able, without extra guidance, to construct graphs to illustrate their observations. Fully aware of health and safety issues, these students investigate the combination of elements. Using their observations, they suggest products and support their conclusions with word equations. Middle attaining students, using computer keyboard skills, pilot a teacher-produced Power Point presentation, to further their understanding of the environment. Lower attainers know the affects of magnets, but a number have a confused understanding about lines of magnetic field, frequently allowing them to cross each other on their diagrams.

137. Lesson observations and a scrutiny of work show that at the end of Key Stage 4, students' attainment is below the national average. This is an improvement and differs from the results of the 1999 GCSE examinations. Changes in timetable arrangements, setting, examination and teaching methods, introduced within the last two years, and now fully applicable to this key stage, have assisted change. Early indications from modular examination results for the current Year 11 students indicate the effectiveness of the measures.

138. Higher attaining Year 10 students, using the results of their practical investigations, are able to construct and use best-fit graphs. Following a practical demonstration of the reduction of lead oxide, students are able to describe and explain the extraction of iron from its ore. Through investigation, they know that altering either temperature or concentration can change rates of chemical reaction. Aware of fair test procedures, middle attaining students, can make justified predictions and judgements. A small number of lower-attaining students are able to present data, obtained from physical exercise and related to pulse rate, in graphical format. Other low attainers know and understand the vocabulary of photosynthesis, and are able to write a word equation to describe it.

139. Higher attaining Year 11 students are able to identify the melting point of paraffin wax. Working independently, within the Structure and Bonding module, they can devise an investigation based on their own scientific knowledge and make quantitative predictions. Using their knowledge of the periodic table, middle-attaining students are able to identify an unknown element. They are aware of the arrangement of electrons, the formation of ions, and properties of a range of molecular structures. Lower attaining students investigate the relationship between the length of a pendulum and the time of oscillation. With guidance, lower attainers apply the principles of fair testing, when making predictions about variables to be considered when dissolving jelly.

140. Overall, learning is satisfactory. In Key Stage 3, it was good or better in eight of the ten lessons observed. It was unsatisfactory in one, where students were casual in their understanding of magnetic fields. Lower attaining students, many on the special educational needs register, made at least sound progress. In Year 8, a class with three statemented students and 14 on the register, receiving good support from a recently introduced support assistant, with appropriate teaching, make good progress.

141. In Key Stage 4, learning was satisfactory. In three of the fourteen lessons observed, learning was good, and in one unsatisfactory. In this lesson, a number of disaffected students chose not to work voluntarily. Special educational needs students make sound progress. In the laboratory areas, no additional support is provided for students with special educational needs and this slows their progress.

142. Students' attitudes to learning within lessons are satisfactory overall. In Key Stage 3, the students' response is satisfactory and on occasions good, in both year groups. In Key Stage 4, the response was satisfactory in 12 of the 14 lessons observed, good in one and unsatisfactory in the other. However, students are often casual in their movement between lessons and the start of many lessons is delayed. Students are mainly attentive, take a pride in the presentation of their work and work in a mature manner, especially in Key Stage 4. In investigative work they handle equipment confidently and record results accurately. They have good relationships with the teachers and work co-operatively, together, when sharing apparatus. A number of potentially disaffected students respond well to the methods of experienced teachers. In both key stages some students have a tendency to call out answers. Students do not always have sufficient urgency when completing their investigations.

143. Teaching overall is satisfactory. In Key Stage 3 it is good. It was good or better in eight of the ten lessons observed, and was never less than satisfactory. In Key Stage 4 it was satisfactory. It was good in four of the 14 lessons observed, unsatisfactory in one and satisfactory in the remainder. Teachers create very good relationships with students and manage students well. They have good subject knowledge, plan effectively and often write the objectives of the lesson on the whiteboard at the beginning of the lesson. They use a range of teaching methods, and supported by good service from laboratory technicians, select and use resources well. On occasions there is insufficient pace to practical investigations. There is insufficient use of Information and communication technology to support students' learning and investigation. Homework, although set, is not always sufficiently demanding, or clearly outlined. Marking, assessment procedures and the tracking of students' progress are good, and are well used by staff, to encourage student progress. Numeracy skills are actively developed.

144. Since the last inspection there have been improvements in a number of areas. The teaching accommodation is now mainly restricted to six laboratories and nearby classrooms; four laboratories have been refurbished, but the octagonal island benching limits practical investigation opportunity for classes of 25 students or more, and the classrooms restrict the range of practical activities when 33 students are present. All teachers in the department are qualified to teach the subject and a number share important managerial responsibilities. The head of department and the staff have a shared commitment to improve standards in the subject. Schemes of work, pupil grouping, modular work, assessment procedures, appropriate INSET and the greater use of textbook material, rather than worksheets, are helping to raise standards and now require consolidation

145. A few deficiencies remain. A laboratory is still being used as a social area for unsupervised students. There is still an absence of external facilities to support learning modules on life processes and living things, although a conservation area is being developed. The external volatile chemical store has not been replaced. There is insufficient provision of education assistance for students with special educational needs, when working within the laboratory.

146. Resources are adequate, are well managed and are efficiently stored by technicians. Attendance at a data-logging club, a radio club and a revision/homework club enhance the learning of a few students.

ART

147. Standards of attainment in art are average at Key Stage 3 and above average at Key Stage 4.

148. Teacher assessment at Key Stage 3 in 1999 indicates that students are attaining above national expectations. Observation in lessons and looking at student's work indicate that standards are in line with national expectations. By the end of the Key Stage 3 students of all levels of attainment, including those with special educational needs, attain in line with national expectations. For example, students developing further work done in the previous term, select images from their pictorial compositions on a theme of personal interest. These are made from observation and by collecting visually stimulating items from a number of sources. Being asked to relate their designs to a circular shape, students show they can use line and tone to describe shape and form, and change their drawings to relate to the circular shape in which they are working. This is typical of what might be expected of students of this age

149. In 1999, the number of students gaining higher GCSE grades was above the national average. This was also true of the number of students gaining A*-G grades. When compared with the other subjects they do, students do better in art. Girls do better than boys; the attainment of boys is in line with national averages and girls exceed this. Since the last inspection when attainment was below the national average there has been a year on year improvement. The work of students currently reaching the end of Key Stage 4 shows that all abilities are attaining above national averages. For example, students working on a still life theme draw and paint confidently from observation, showing an increased understanding of tonal values. In the lino cuts which they make based on these paintings students understand the need to simplify their designs to meet the constraints of a new media, and how they might use a reduced range of colours to good effect. Sketchbook work is effectively used to explore ideas and do research for the critical and historical aspect of the course.

150. The improved level of attainment at both key stages is because the quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection. At the time of the last inspection, one sixth of teaching at Key Stage 3 had unsatisfactory features, whereas now all teaching at Key Stage 3 is at least satisfactory and all teaching at Key Stage 4 is good. Teachers have a secure knowledge of their subject they are confident when giving technical instruction and in ensuring that for the most part there is a positive atmosphere for learning in the classroom.

151. Learning at Key Stage 3 is always satisfactory; for example, in a Year 9 graphics lesson the clear teacher introduction helped students focus on what was expected in respect of the initial designs. This is supported by technical instruction about how the

images students select may be reproduced. The good examples of work on display help students to aim for higher attainment. The satisfactory learning which results, ensures students make progress in the acquisition of technical skills and an increase in their understanding of what may contribute to good poster design.

152. The quality of assessment and review at Key Stage 3 is improving. New systems are in place, which help students focus on their level of attainment and teachers' comments on the review sheets help to set targets for future improvement, because of the local system of middle schools, students' start the Key Stage 3 course in the previous school. There are no formal curricular links in place to ensure progression, and no information is provided by the middle school about student's attainment in art at the end of Year 7.

153. Learning at Key Stage 4 is always good and is the result of good teaching. For example in a lesson where students make mixed media work on a theme of wooded landscape, there is an expectation that the students will organise their own work and materials at the start of the lesson. Students respond well to this approach with good levels of motivation. The aim for the lesson is clear and the students understand that they will experiment with different paint media. Teaching provides individual support, helping students to target areas for improvement, suggesting different media more appropriate to the students' intentions, or providing stimulus from the work of others to help learning. This approach promoted gains in knowledge for students of all prior attainment. Students with special educational needs are effectively supported. Students of high attainment are suitably challenged. Students are fully aware of the assessment criteria for the GCSE examination. These are effectively linked to the department's own assessment procedures and helps students focus on how they might improve their attainment.

154. At the time of the last inspection the curriculum at Key Stage 3 was described as narrow. The majority of work is still in two dimensions and uses a limited range of media. However, there is improvement as all students now have the opportunity to work in three dimensions. Planning at Key Stage 3 in relation to coverage of the National Curriculum shows weakness. Documentation does not show how the Key Stage 3 course and projects link to the National Curriculum programme of study, and there is no overview of the course because the teachers work independently, devising their own course.

155. Good curricular development has taken place at Key Stage 4. The critical historical element of GCSE has been targeted for improvement and this has helped improve attainment. There are also now more opportunities for three-dimensional work at this key stage with students producing very impressive plaster sculpture of figures and fabric sculpture based on natural form. Departmental meetings are not formally held and no minutes are available.

156. The college meetings' programme, which should link the department to the senior managers of the college, is not being used to the department's advantage.

157. Art makes a good contribution to the cultural development of students at both key stages. All students learn about the art from different times and from different cultures, but work from different cultures is insufficiently represented in the examples shown to students, and in the display material about the college and art rooms. Key Stage 4 students enhance their understanding of art through visits to various galleries in London. Displays of student's work both in the art rooms and in the public places of the college add to the cultural life of the college and ensure that a wider audience can share the work.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

158. Standards of achievement overall throughout the college are above average and students make good progress at both key stages.

159. At the end of Key Stage 3, students' levels of attainment as measured by the teacher assessments of their National Curriculum work are above average. Students of all levels of prior attainment achieve well in both attainment targets, designing and making. By the end of Year 9, students have acquired a sound knowledge of the design process and an understanding of a range of materials. Their use of graphical skills and modelling are a strength. Students are confident in communicating and developing their ideas in a variety of ways. Students achieved work of good quality in plastic clip production, (using computers to assist the designing and making processes), and in their recipe books made in food technology and in the clock-making module. Students with special educational needs are well supported individually in class by the class teacher but there is insufficient classroom assistance in practical lessons. Their progress is at least satisfactory and sometimes good, particularly when they use information technology to support learning. There are however, insufficient differentiated learning materials to help them.

160. At Key Stage 4, GCSE results are above national and college averages and there is an above average entry of students. Previously, 28 per cent of students achieved grades A*-C. This has risen to 52 per cent with 99 per cent gaining grades A*-G. There is a gap between the performance of girls and boys. Boys under achieve national averages by a small margin, which has narrowed over the last few years. These results represent a significant improvement since the last inspection. They have been recognised by a prize for the Technology College that has achieved the most improved results in GCSE examinations in technology in the country. Students are enthusiastic about their work and are encouraged to come and use the facilities in the department out of lessons. This has a positive effect on progress and standards. Folio work is of a good standard generally with some outstanding work in textiles, graphics and food technology where students show flair, originality and a high standard of presentation in their work. Opportunities are not always taken up to use information and communication technology with whole groups, although students are encouraged to use it individually. They make good progress in developing key skills as in calculating and costing a range of materials and completed items. They work well in pairs and small groups and consider the opinions of others when modifying their designs.

161. Teaching is good at Key Stage 3 and very good overall at Key Stage 4. In 80 per cent of the lessons observed overall, the teaching was good or better. In Key Stage 4, 60 per cent of the lessons observed displayed very good teaching. Teachers have high expectations of the students, which are clearly communicated. Lessons are well planned resourced managed and excellent relationships exist between teachers and students. Classrooms have extensive displays of high quality work, which is used as a teaching aid in lessons to drive up standards. Students are made aware of the criteria for the award of marks, their current level and what they must do to improve. The incidence of disaffected students mentioned in the previous inspection report has virtually disappeared.

162. Technology is a strong department within the college and the teachers have worked hard together to raise standards. The head of department is an effective leader, who has been instrumental in formulating the strategies, which have been successful in raising standards of teaching and learning. Analysis of examination results careful planning and monitoring of teaching and results have all played a part. Departmental targets for improvement have been exceeded. The department is planning some suitable further

developments such as the introduction of a course in systems and control which is relevant to the needs of the college's students, and is intended to motivate students to raise performance still higher.

GEOGRAPHY

163. Standards of attainment are broadly average throughout the college.

164. Scrutiny of work and interviews with Year 8 students, show that their prior geographic knowledge is below that expected nationally. Few have well-developed map skills, their sense of place is poor, and they have a weak understanding of geographic processes. However, most students make good progress and by the end of Key Stage 3, attainment is close to the national average. In 1999, teachers' assessment of work showed that 58 per cent of all students attained a National Curriculum Level 5 or above, compared to a national average of 61 per cent. This is an improvement over 1998, when 50 per cent attained these levels, whilst 58 per cent did so nationally. Most Year 9 students have a good knowledge and understanding of geographic processes, such as plate tectonics, but few are able to identify and give reasons for patterns or to see the relationships between aspects of the environment. Higher attaining students make only satisfactory progress because of teaching which insufficiently stretches or challenges them. Students with special educational needs also make unsatisfactory progress as a result of teaching materials which often do not suit their needs and a deficiency of class room support.

165. At age 16, attainment at grades A*-C at GCSE in 1999 was just below the national average for all schools. Girls' attainment at A*-C exceeded the national average; boys' attainments, though, were well below the national average for these grades. Attainment of grades A*-G, 96 per cent in 1999, is close to the national average of 97 per cent. The trend over time is one of improving attainment. In 1998, attainment at grades A*-C of both boys and girls was well below the national average. The average grade obtained by students in geography has improved significantly over the last four years. Students who study geography continue to attain grades that are slightly lower than those attained in their other subjects at college, but this difference is narrowing over time. Most students in geography attain the grades predicted for them on the basis of their prior attainment at Key Stage 3.

166. Students make satisfactory progress throughout Key Stage 4. Many students in Years 10 and 11 have a good knowledge and understanding of geographic processes. The sense of place of most students is good. However, many students are unable to use correct terminology when describing geographic features, have weakly developed written skills and lack practice in the geographic skills of evaluating evidence and making judgements.

167. The attitude of students to their learning is satisfactory, but varies greatly according to the type of teaching they receive. In most lessons, students are quiet, courteous and respectful to the teacher. Relationships among students and with the teacher are good; strong classroom management ensures that behaviour is invariably good. However, most students are compliant rather than eager learners. Their ability to sit and listen to the teacher is limited and consequently they become restless and inattentive when the teacher's exposition is over long. The most enthusiastic students are found in those lessons where they are actively involved in the learning, through problem solving or group work, rather than in the completion of numerous worksheets and textbook exercises.

169. Teaching was satisfactory overall at both key stages. It was at least satisfactory in the vast majority of lessons seen and was good or better in nearly a quarter. Most teachers, especially at Key Stage 4, have a good knowledge and understanding of their subject,

which they convey to students through clear, authoritative and stimulating explanations. Teachers who are less secure in their subject rely too much on worksheet exercises and over long explanations, which quickly result in students losing interest in the lesson and becoming inattentive and disruptive. Half of teachers seen make good use of question and answer, but few use this to probe and challenge students' understanding and are often content to accept superficial answers. Lesson planning is satisfactory. In the better lessons, teachers set clear and realistic objectives and select activities, which will enable students to meet these aims. In many lessons, however, objectives are vague and there is insufficient planning to stretch and challenge the higher attaining students or to provide support for those who learn at a slower pace. Many teachers in the department use too narrow a range of activities in their classes. Group work, pair work and role play are used by some teachers and are successful at developing skills as well as providing challenge for students, but these methods, are not widespread across the subject. Too often, teachers occupy students with low level tasks such as copying and colouring maps, completing weakly structured worksheets and text book exercises which results in students becoming disinterested and restless. There is inconsistency in the quality and setting of homework. The department does not build on its good class management and good relationships with students, to develop teaching approaches that are more exciting and imaginative.

170. The geography curriculum is carefully planned and benefits from a well-thought out programme of fieldwork and imaginative use of information and communication technology. However, schemes of work do not currently identify opportunities where higher attaining students can be extended or how slower learning students can be supported. Also, departmental planning gives insufficient guidance to teachers about approaches to teaching and learning. The department has an appropriate approach to assessment and is beginning to make use of the targets identified for students on the basis of their prior attainment. The department does not yet fully share this assessment information with students. There is little regular monitoring to ensure that students remain on target and little intervention if they do not. The department has a clear set of aims and objectives, which mirror those of the college. There is insufficiently rigorous monitoring of teaching and learning and little sharing of good practice. The deployment of staff does not currently ensure that the specialist graduate geographers teach enough of their subject; the use of non-specialists has a slightly adverse impact on standards in geography.

HISTORY

171. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is below national expectations as indicated by the proportion of students achieving level 5 and above in teacher assessments in 1999. Results have been at this level for the last three years, though they were only slightly under national figures in 1998. Girls outperformed boys in 1999 by a greater margin than that nationally, as they have in two of the last three years.

172. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is well below the national average for all other schools, as indicated by the proportion of students achieving A*-C grades at GCSE in 1999. The proportion of those attaining A*-G grades is just above the national average. Apart from 1997, there has been a decline in the higher grades since 1995, with the 1999 results being the worst during that time. In 1999, students did worse in history than in most of their other subjects. The trend of the girls doing better than the boys at the higher grades was reversed for the first time in 1999, though boys scored below the national average for similar schools.

173. The overall level of attainment of students currently, at the end of Key Stage 3, is just below national expectations. This is a marked improvement on the situation previously reported and far more students are achieving in line with their prior attainment and capabilities. This is mostly attributable to the use of a wider range of teaching strategies and a greater emphasis on the development of history skills. Most students have a sound knowledge and understanding of the key characteristics of the subject and of chronology, aspects criticised in the last report. Nearly all students have also improved in satisfactorily selecting and recording information from written and pictorial sources. Many higher attaining students produce extended writing of a high standard. However, weak basic literacy skills of lower attaining students and those with special educational needs constrain development of recording skills unless they are helped with appropriate texts and writing frames. Most students understand simple causes, for instance in Year 8 when students effectively found a number of reasons for poverty in Elizabethan England. Higher attaining students in Year 8 can prioritise and evaluate causes of discontent against the Catholic Church; students of similar attainment in Year 9 successfully used their analytical skills to empathise with conditions on board a slave ship from a film of "Roots". Skills of evaluation, interpretation and enquiry of middle attaining students are less well developed.

174. Attainment of students currently at the end of Key Stage 4 is below the national average, but better than the latest examination results. This is due to the current cohort of students being more able and to the use of more varied teaching strategies, though lack of consistent and rigorous application is resulting in under-achievement in a minority of students. Nearly all students make notes satisfactorily from a variety of sources and can make accurate deductions from these. Most students have a broad understanding of change and continuity and sound skills of research and organisation. However, a secure knowledge of developments over time in the history of medicine is lacking in middle and lower attaining students. Some higher attaining students show sound skills of extended writing, often with empathy and good analysis. These skills are less developed in middle and lower attaining students, who often lack the confidence to think for themselves as challenging opportunities for deliberate independent analysis are too infrequently provided.

175. Students with special educational needs achieve standards in line with their prior attainment and make satisfactory progress in both key stages. The provision of appropriate materials to match these students' needs assists their progress.

176. Students' attitudes to work and behaviour are good in three-quarters of lessons and are only rarely unsatisfactory. They are equally good at both key stages. This is a significant improvement on the situation at the time of the last inspection. Most students settle quickly to tasks and listen well to the teacher. They also listen quite well to each other, especially when reading out loud. There is, however, a tendency to call out answers if the teacher is not adequately firm. Nearly all students concentrate and work well throughout the lesson, including those with special educational needs except on occasions when materials to match their needs are not provided. The high standards expected and almost universally enforced by the department ensure that students behave well and respect the teacher. They also respect each other's views and feelings although there are limited opportunities provided for lively discussion. Most students take care over the presentation of their work and do their homework regularly. Most students work well independently, especially higher attainers when set challenging tasks. Lower attainers and those with special educational needs often display a readiness to seek help from the teacher when they have a genuine need, though some ask too readily and become over-dependent on the teacher, if allowed to be. Students' concentration can also vary if the lesson objectives have not been clearly explained or if inadequate time is provided for problem-solving tasks, as with middle attaining students in Year 11. The number choosing

history at Key Stage 4 is below the national average and girls form by far the largest component. This reflects to some extent the difficulties that the subject presents for students with weaknesses in literacy.

177. The quality of teaching is good at Key Stage 3 and satisfactory overall at Key Stage 4. Teaching is best at Key Stage 3 where nearly three-quarters is good and it is only rarely unsatisfactory. This is a marked improvement on the situation previously reported, when half of the lessons at Key Stage 3 were unsatisfactory. This improvement is largely due to the increased emphasis on the development of learning and history skills as a result of a wider range of teaching styles. These have been prompted by revised schemes of work and more effective assessment on the initiative of the new head of department. Most teachers have a good subject knowledge and non-specialists plan work well with valuable support from the head of department so that they make a positive contribution to teaching at Key Stage 3. However, this situation requires constant monitoring and a permanent solution to non-specialist teaching would ease the situation, although it is not currently adversely effecting standards. Teachers set clear learning objectives, which are explained, to the students. Students are managed well, relations are normally very good and high standards of behaviour are set. A wider variety of teaching strategies are being encouraged and used which now develop learning skills more than previously. For instance, there is greater use of evidence seeking and recording from various types of sources, more active student involvement through problem-solving at Key Stage 3 and extension work for higher attainers to develop empathy skills. Marking is done regularly and in a helpful way to inform students of strengths and weaknesses and to highlight areas for improvement. An improved system of regular assessments, though only recently introduced, is providing closer monitoring of students' progress and informing them of their National Curriculum levels. Matching tasks and materials to the needs of the lower attaining students and those with special educational needs is done well at Key Stage 3, but only by a minority of teachers. Development of their literacy skills is consequently constrained and they make less progress than other students. However, the overall effect of these improvements in teaching at Key Stage 3 is that most students make good progress in learning in lessons. Their progress over time is satisfactory compared with their prior attainment and most students show a keen interest and concentrate well on their work.

178. Shortcomings in teaching are more evident at Key Stage 4 and progress in learning is satisfactory rather than good. Progress over time is also satisfactory compared with their prior attainment. Although there are many of the strengths seen at Key Stage 3, teaching too frequently lacks rigorous challenge to stretch higher and middle attaining students as expectation are not being set high enough. Often, inadequate time is provided to enable students to take responsibility for their own learning, either because too much time is spent on exposition by the teacher or the pace is too fast to allow for effective working through problems analytically by students themselves. Homework also needs to be more purposefully set as an additional challenging exercise to test their earlier learning.

179. Important improvements have taken place since the last inspection, many due to the initiative of an enthusiastic head of department: teaching methods have more variety and focus appropriately on skills' development; assessment procedures have been improved, though monitoring of individual progress is undeveloped at Key Stage 4; the learning environment is enhanced through well organised outside visits; more attractive displays are seen in history rooms and the use of information technology through history in Years 8 and 9 has begun. There is a need for more thorough monitoring of teaching practice and a sharing of good practice.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

180. Standards of attainment are close to the national average in both key stages.

181. In 1999, the teachers' own assessments of students' attainment made at the end of Key Stage 3, indicated above average standards, with 66 per cent of students having reached expected standards against 59 per cent nationally. The findings of the inspection are that attainment is lower than that indicated by the teachers' assessments. Prior to this academic year, students were taught to use computers in special information and communication technology lessons. These lessons have now ceased because the college intends students learn and extend their skills in other subjects, rather than in information and communication technology lessons, especially through English, design and technology, mathematics and humanities. Whilst the new system is proving moderately successful in a few subjects, many teachers are still not yet sufficiently confident or inclined to use new technology in their lessons in the way that the college intends. Nevertheless, the majority of students become capable and independent users of information and communication technology by the end of Key Stage 3, and their attainment is broadly average for their age. Considering the students' below average attainment at the time of their entry to the college, the average standards reached by the end of Key Stage 3 represent good progress.

182. By the end of Key Stage 4, attainment is average overall, which represents good achievement for these students. The college's past record in GCSE examinations is a good one. In 1998, the examination results for the short GCSE course were well above average, and 22 of the 23 candidates gained Grade C or better. The results of those taking the full GCSE course in 1998 were outstanding: seven of the eight candidates gained grades A*, A or B. There were no candidates for the full GCSE examination in 1999, but five candidates, all girls, took a short GCSE course: two of the candidates gained Grade C and the remaining three gained Grade D. Of the 21 students taking the GNVQ Foundation course in Information Technology in 1999, five gained merit awards, ten gained passes, and six did not complete the course. Boys and girls achieve broadly the same in examinations.

183. Many more students are taking GCSE courses than in the past. At present, a third of all Year 11 students are taking a full GCSE course in information technology though this proportion rises to forty per cent in Year 10. The college intends students who do not take GCSE courses to extend and practise their knowledge and skills in all other subjects, as in Key Stage 3. Again, the success of this strategy is very mixed at this stage. The attainment of the Year 11 GCSE students is a little above average though there is a wide range of attainment, from low to very high.

184. Though the picture is improving, many opportunities to enhance students' attainment through the use of new technology in a few subjects are lost. The college recognises this and teachers from each subject department are working together to develop information technology in each key stage.

185. Throughout the college, students make good use of word-processing and desktop publishing software, especially in English lessons. In design and technology, Year 11 students make effective use of computer-aided design in graphics lessons, for example, to design and produce drawings in orthographic projection of a house for *The Three Bears*. One of the mathematics teachers is developing students' skills effectively, for example, in LOGO and in the use of spreadsheets. However, the situation will not be fully satisfactory in mathematics until all of the mathematics teachers are teaching in this way. In music lessons, students make effective use of computers for simple composition and to improve the presentation of their work in each key stage. Students taking GCSE courses in

business studies and in information technology use computers independently to produce their coursework, often to high standards. However, insufficient work is being done in humanities subjects, modern languages, science, art and physical education.

186. The strengths of the students' attainment at each key stage lie in communicating and handling information rather than in controlling, measuring and modelling. The best work reveals an imaginative approach to design, analysis and evaluation, as shown, for example, in a Year 11 student's project in the design of a magazine for teenage girls, which was interesting and showed both advanced communication and writing skills.

187. Students make good overall progress in their learning and good progress in each key stage. However, insufficient attention is paid to students' special educational needs: teachers do not have copies of individual education plans and these plans and individual targets are not therefore taken into account in the planning of lessons. Students are helped to improve their numerical skills, for example, through the use of spreadsheets to make calculations and to produce graphs; however, weak literacy skills hinder the progress of many students in this subject, especially in the examination courses. At present, the college is making insufficient use of the computers' potential to improve these skills. In consequence of the good teaching, the quality of students' learning is also good. All students in the GCSE courses make good progress, as can be seen from their coursework folders. Higher attaining students often assume responsibility for their own learning. A good example of this was seen in a Year 11 business studies lesson, when some of the students went out to carry out a survey in high street shops.

188. Students behave well in lessons because the teachers' discipline is effective. In the best lessons, especially those for the most able GCSE students, relationships are very good and students exercise self-discipline. Students' attitudes are satisfactory. The great majority have good attitudes, are diligent and take care to complete their assignments and present them well; however, at each key stage, some students are not inclined to work hard enough and need frequent encouragement to do so.

189. The teaching is good. Teaching was found to be at least satisfactory in all lessons at each key stage and was good in half of them. The strengths of the teaching are the teachers' good subject and technical knowledge, their effective management of the students, their high expectations for behaviour and attainment, and their good working relationships with them. These factors largely account for the good achievement in each key stage.

190. The college's computer facilities are good. These are open to students before and after college, and at break and lunchtimes. Most students enjoy working with new technology and the college's open-access policy enables them easily to find a computer when needed to assist them in their work.

191. The improved management of the subject has provided satisfactory curriculum planning for each key stage though the National Curriculum requirements are not fully met in respect of some students at Key Stage 4, because control technology is not taught in the food technology course. The department development plan sets out priorities for the new GCSE course. However, the delivery of the curriculum and standards achieved are not monitored at Key Stage 4 and the planning does not refer to raising standards. The assessment system at Key Stage 3 needs to be improved and should involve all subject departments since the subject is now cross-curricular. The system was effective when all students had planned information and communication technology lessons, but standards across subjects, in terms of National Curriculum levels, are now uncertain.

192. At the time of the previous inspection, students were underachieving, management of the subject was unsatisfactory, the curriculum was inadequate at each key stage, teachers lacked the technical knowledge to teach the subject effectively, and there was no full-time technician. The situation is now very much better. The management of the subject and the curriculum have greatly improved though some further improvements are still necessary. Standards are much higher and students achieve well. There has been considerable investment in staff training though some is still needed for the college to achieve its plans for consistently good teaching of information and communication technology in all subjects of the curriculum. A full-time technician is now in post.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

193. The proportion of students gaining grades A* to C in the GCSE examinations in 1999 was below the national average in French, but well above in German. These results showed a downward trend in both languages from the previous year: effective action has been taken in the department's development plan to improve. The proportion of students gaining grades A* to G was in line with the national average in French and well above in German. Boys performed better in French than in some other subjects; girls performed better in French, and significantly better in German, than in some other subjects. In college, girls performed better than boys in both languages.

194. Students' attainment by the end of Key Stage 3 in French and German is average. Understanding of the spoken word is good, since teachers make consistently good use of the foreign language in the classroom. Students have a good understanding of topic vocabulary, and they are able to extract information from cassette successfully. Oral skills are satisfactory. Some responses tend to be short and not all lessons present opportunities for students to speak. Year 8 beginners in Spanish participated well in pair work, asking each other questions about likes and dislikes of college subjects. Lower attaining students in Year 9 responded in short phrases to the football game, and gave brief opinions about television programmes. Students write with reasonable accuracy, but much of the writing comprises lists and exercises, which are not drawn together for short passages of extended writing.

195. Students' attainment by the end of Key Stage 4 is average in French and above average in German. Students have a good understanding of the foreign language used in the classroom by the teachers. Year 10 students have a good knowledge of reflexive verbs to enable them to talk about their daily routine or to understand other people on cassette. Year 11 students have a good knowledge of the future tense. Higher attaining students talked confidently about future events. Lower attaining students in Year 11 used the immediate future with prompt cards in pair work. In German, Year 11 students knew a good range of adjectives to describe their own and other people's characteristics. Higher attainers in both languages display a good knowledge of tenses and write accurately in letters, post cards, brochures on Exeter, descriptions and presentations. The standard of presentation of written work at both key stages is in many cases unsatisfactory. Students fail to complete corrections.

196. Students' learning at both key stages is satisfactory. In many lessons students have the opportunity to consolidate vocabulary and grammatical structures from previous lessons. Beginners in Year 10 in a Spanish lesson consolidated their knowledge of basic directions and developed them with the addition of new phrases. This was then tested in a reading exercise. Dual linguists in Year 10 acquired new vocabulary and constructions on the daily routine in French, and Year 9 German students learnt new prepositions with the

dative case, reinforced by means of a song. In many lessons students showed an interest and worked at a good pace, as in a Year 10 lesson with average students when teacher's planning of different activities helped students to sustain their concentration. In some lessons, response to the teacher is limited and students do not make an effort to participate. Teachers sometimes work harder than the students. Learning was unsatisfactory in two lessons, one in Year 10 and one in Year 8. In the former, students were talkative and progress was slow; in the latter, the poor behaviour of a group of boys impeded the progress of the remainder.

197. The learning of students with special educational needs at both key stages is satisfactory. In a French lesson in Year 9 with support, the progress made by them was better than might be expected. The students had a good recall of words from the previous lesson. Vocabulary was consolidated by means of good strategies such as the use of a memory game and flashcards, which encouraged students to produce quick replies. Students sustained their concentration very well. Their progress is the result of very good teaching.

198. Students' attitudes are satisfactory at Key Stage 3 and generally good at Key Stage 4. Overall they are satisfactory. In many lessons students are attentive and well behaved and they apply themselves well to the task. When given the opportunity to work in groups or pairs, they co-operate with each other and relationships are good. Year 9 students in a German lesson enjoyed seeing their teacher looking out of the cupboard holding a cue card to show where he was. They responded sensibly and sang well at the end of the lesson. There are shortcomings when students call out the answers or when they shout out for help. A small group of boys in a Year 8 French lesson behaved badly and did not co-operate with the teacher, despite repeated requests.

199. The quality of teaching overall is satisfactory. Two lessons were unsatisfactory; teaching was good in just under half of the remainder, and very good in one lesson. Teachers have sound subject knowledge, and they make very good use of the foreign language in the classroom. This impacts well on improving students' understanding. Lessons are well planned and well prepared. There is usually a variety of tasks and of skills, although some lessons require more opportunities for students to speak and take a more active role and to participate in pair work. There is also a need for teachers to help students become less reliant on prompt sheets. Very good use is made of resources, particularly the overhead projector and the cassette recorder. Some lessons benefited from the use of flash cards, computers and video. Worksheets are well used to complement the equipment. The management of students is generally good. However, in the two unsatisfactory lessons, the teachers did not have the full attention of the whole class for all the lesson. Homework is set regularly and extends the work of the classroom; in only one instance was it unchallenging. Regularity of marking and the standards of presentation are not consistent across the department.

200. As mentioned in the last inspection report, there is still scope for extending the repertoire of writing skills and for developing oracy. New staff have joined the department, including two native speakers. Spanish has been added to the curriculum in Year 8 and Y10, to join German as an additional modern foreign language. However, time allocation for languages in Key Stage 3 has been reduced. New courses have been introduced and schemes of work have been rewritten.

MUSIC

201. Standards of attainment in both Key Stages 3 and 4 are in line with national

expectations. The percentage of students, who gained grades A*-C results at GCSE examinations in 1999 was above the national average, it was also higher than in most other subjects in the college. This represents a significant improvement on the previous three years.

202. By the end of Key Stage 3, the students are familiar with staff notation and have experience of graphic notation. They perform well on keyboards and percussion instruments using appropriate fingering and stick techniques. When listening to music, they are able to recognise instruments effectively and follow a score; for example a Year 9 class was able to listen to Beethoven's Egmont Overture and indicate all the instrumentation changes on the score as they happened. Pitch concepts, however, are under-developed and this shows, in both Key Stages 3 and 4, in the composition work, which is limited to a rather theoretical approach in which the melodies are too closely related to the chord notes.

203. At Key Stage 4, performance standards are high reflecting the standards attained by the students taking instrumental lessons. This also impacts positively on the extra-curricular work where such groups as the college band and choir achieve very high standards. Boys and girls perform equally well and lower attaining students are able to perform at a level appropriate to their prior attainment. Higher attaining students at Key Stage 3 are not always achieving at an appropriate level. Students with special educational needs make satisfactory progress and achieve standards commensurate with their prior attainment.

204. The students in both key stages have a good attitude to music. The number of students opting for GCSE is usually well above the national average and there is a good take-up for extra-curricular activities and instrumental lessons. The students' relationships with the teachers and with each other are good and they collaborate well both in class and in extra-curricular work. An indication of this is the way that students form various after-college music groups which rehearse and perform, often without direct staff supervision. Behaviour is very good at Key Stage 4 and usually good at Key Stage 3. However there are sometimes lapses in the behaviour of a few students in Year 9, these usually occur when the work is of a less practical nature.

205. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory at Key Stage 3 and good at Key Stage 4. At Key Stage 3, the quality of both teaching and learning was satisfactory in two thirds of lessons seen and good in the others. At Key Stage 4, the standard was good or better in all lessons. The teachers have good subject knowledge and performance skills and these are used to good effect. A notable feature is the way in which their knowledge of popular music techniques is used to motivate the students. Lessons are well planned with a good balance of activities and there is effective use made of a wide range of resources. The good relationships with students contribute to effective classroom management. The teaching methods do not always take account of the higher and lower attaining students and work is pitched at the level of the middle attaining students only. Although individual help is often given to the lower attaining students more extension tasks could be given to the higher attaining students to ensure that they are fully stretched. Homework is not used effectively at Key Stage 3, to support classroom learning because, apart from practice for students learning instruments, little is set. There is at least satisfactory progress in all lessons with students acquiring new skills or consolidating and gaining in fluency. The work builds on previous lessons and from year to year. The progress in instrumental work is particularly good with students following well structured programmes of study.

206. The allocation of time for music is well below the national minimum recommendation in Key Stage 3, and in Key Stage 4 the time allocation in Year 10 is low. This does have an effect on what can be achieved by the students, particularly as the entry standards at Year 8 are below average. The accommodation has many good features but there is a shortage of spaces for group teaching when both main rooms are in use, or instrumental teachers are using the practice rooms. Similarly, although the department has a wide variety of resources, when both rooms are in use there is a need for more equipment for the second room. This would allow more practical activities to take place and particularly help in the teaching of composition. The department is well led. Standards have been maintained since the last inspection when the department was described as one of the strengths of the college.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

207. Standards of attainment are in line with national expectations in the core physical education classes at both key stages. Standards achieved by students following the GCSE course are below average.

208. At the last inspection results for those students opting for the GCSE course were significantly below the national average. In 1999, the proportion of students achieving the higher A* to C grades was below the national average, but results are improving each year. The department is setting and achieving appropriate targets for this improvement. Too few girls were entered to make comparison with boys reliable. When compared with other subjects in the college boys do less well in physical education than in most other subjects, but this gap is narrowing each year.

209. At the end of Key Stage 3, teacher assessments show the majority of students attain the standard expected nationally. Inspection evidence supports these assessments. By the end of the key stage, students have a satisfactory understanding of how to prepare themselves for physical activity but are still dependent upon the teacher to do this for them at the start of the lesson. They are competent in the basic skills in a number of games and have a sound understanding of the rules and simple tactics. When given the opportunity they can observe accurately and comment on what they see and what needs to be done to improve performance. In the same way, when required they can plan activities, as they did in a dance lesson, in small groups, composing sample routines showing a range of movement patterns. Students work well together in groups and handle equipment safely and responsibly.

210. By the end of Key Stage 4, attainment in core physical education lessons is in line with national expectations for most students. Although many students make good progress throughout both key stages, progress is satisfactory overall, because, especially at Key Stage 4, a small but persistent minority of students do not fully participate, a few regularly do not bring their kit and a few, mainly girls, show a lack of physical commitment. Students have sound skills and knowledge in a number of games and activities. When given the opportunity, they have sufficient knowledge and understanding to act as officials for these games, and apply the rules fairly. They are able to apply basic tactical ideas to their games as they did in a table tennis lesson on learning to play and use more advanced strokes and in badminton when selecting from a range of service styles. In both key stages, students of all abilities make satisfactory progress. Students with special educational needs are well integrated and take full part in lessons; they achieve in line with their prior attainment and make satisfactory progress in both key stages. Students of all abilities take advantage of the very good extra curricular clubs and together with the house competitions, involvement in these activities is good. The college has an extensive programme of team games against

other colleges. This programme, together with the close links with local sports clubs, gives more able students opportunities for extended work and some go on to play at local, regional and national level. Physical education makes a contribution to students' literacy skills through the widespread use of discussion and question and answer sessions in lessons. GCSE folders show a wide spread of standards in writing skills but these are in line with students' prior attainment. Currently there are few opportunities to develop students' skills in information and communication technology, but this is a priority in the department development plan.

211. Teaching is satisfactory. It is better in Key Stage 4, where almost half the teaching is good. Teachers have good subject knowledge and use this to plan lessons and tasks that help students acquire the necessary skills and knowledge to make progress. Students behave well because of good management of students by teachers especially in Key Stage 3, but the number of non-participants in some lessons, particularly in Key Stage 4, remains an issue from the last inspection. Non-participants are not usually involved in lessons. Lessons are well organised and run smoothly and many have pace and challenge and the students respond with energy and enthusiasm. This was shown in a GCSE rugby lesson in which boys worked hard to improve their skills of kicking for height and distance and a netball assessment lesson when the girls were keen to show what they had learnt. Equally, when they are asked to comment on their work, they know their strengths and weaknesses, but teachers are inconsistent in their demands for this evaluation and what to do to improve. There is a small amount of non-specialist teaching within the department and while these lessons are generally satisfactory the attainment of students is limited by the lack of detailed subject knowledge in some activities.

212. Management of the subject is satisfactory. The curriculum is supported by well prepared schemes of work and assessment systems. The department is keen to improve standards and positive steps have been taken to do this in examination courses. There is little monitoring of teaching within the department to identify the areas of inconsistency in teaching and bring the satisfactory teaching to the standard of the best. Since the last inspection the college has achieved the Sportsmark Award. A successful lottery bid will be used to improve facilities and develop further the existing good links with local clubs.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

213. GCSE results for 1996-99 show that attainment is below the national average but not significantly so. Compared with other subjects in the college, attainment at GCSE examinations is above average. The attainment levels have remained constant; boys and girls compare equally, although far more girls than boys take the full GCSE course.

214. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is below average for students of this age. Students in Year 8 enter the college with a very low level of knowledge and understanding of Christianity and the main world religions. This level is raised through Key Stage 3 but remains well below average at the end of the key stage. Students have difficulty in describing the key beliefs of the major religions, including Christianity. They are very vague in their understanding of the principal beliefs and teaching associated with Christianity and Islam. They can compare their own and other people's ideas and beliefs but their lack of knowledge means they do not show an understanding of religious issues or what Christians and Muslims believe about those issues and why they behave as they do.

215. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is below average. Students are able to compare aspects of their own and others' experiences and are able to identify what influences their behaviour. However, their poor knowledge and understanding of Christianity and Islam means they are not able to relate their findings to what Christians and Muslims believe and why they behave as they do. They can evaluate their own views on values and moral issues and compare them with others.

216. Satisfactory progress is made across both key stages. Students are adding to their knowledge and understanding of the major religions. This progress means that, although attainment in Year 8 is well below average, by the time students reach the end of Year 11 attainment is only marginally below average. The small number of high attaining students makes unsatisfactory progress in both key stages, because there is a lack of challenging work. The achievement and progress of students with special educational needs are satisfactory across both key stages and this is due to the extra time and attention given by staff and some support from Initiative in Christian Education who assist in the classroom.

217. Students' response is satisfactory at both key stages. Their presentation of work is poor and writing skills are weak particularly at Key Stage 3. Students' attitudes to the subject are good. They are a little 'laid back' at times but their behaviour is good and they respect one another's views and listen well to each other. A very small minority do not want to work but teachers handle this with firmness and understanding. Students relate well to the teachers and show considerable feeling for one another and help one another. Good relationships are a strength of the department.

218. The quality of teaching is satisfactory in both key stages with one third of the teaching being good. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed. Relationships with students are very good and students are managed well. Work is marked and accompanied by constructive comments that give students future targets for improvement. Special education needs students are given particularly good help and boys and girls are equally encouraged to participate in lessons. Videos and good, clear overhead projector transparencies are used very effectively to stimulate students' interest. One set of transparencies, in a Year 8 lesson, was particularly well used and students responded accordingly as they attempted to understand the concept of Jesus as 'God' and 'Man'. The teaching rooms have lively and stimulating displays of pictures and students' own work and this helps to create a positive atmosphere for learning. Few opportunities are given for quiet reflection and the activities provided are limited by the cramped accommodation. In a few lessons, subject knowledge is lacking in depth and the small number of high attaining students is not stretched.

219. Schemes of work are being steadily and effectively developed but clear assessment criteria for each unit of work and at the end of each key stage are not yet built into them to ensure continuity and good progress. There are eight teachers of religious education, six of whom are drafted in from other curriculum areas. This means that many lessons are taught outside specialist rooms, resources are stretched and in some cases subject knowledge is weak. Difficulties are encountered in drawing staff together as a department, teaching is not monitored effectively and as a result students' attainment and progress are limited in some areas.

220. Since the last inspection the number of students taking GCSE has increased. The quality and effectiveness of questioning skills has improved. The number of non-specialists teaching in the department has increased rather than been cut. Attainment has remained below average.