

# INSPECTION REPORT

**King Edward VI Community College**

Totnes, Devon.

LEA area: Devon

Unique reference number: 113520

Principal: Mr Stephen Jones

Reporting inspector: Michael Newton  
2494

Dates of inspection: 7<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> February 2000

Inspection number: 187542

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

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## **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Community

Age range of students: 11 - 18

Gender of students: Mixed

School address: Ashburton Road  
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Devon

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Appropriate authority: Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Penny Wainwright

Date of previous inspection: March 1996

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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D. Granville-Hastings	<i>Lay inspector</i>		Attitudes, values and personal development; Care for students; Parental Links; Community Links.
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J. Carnaghan	<i>Team inspector</i>	Geography.	
R. Portsmouth	<i>Team Inspector</i>	Mathematics.	
A. Cawthera	<i>Team Inspector</i>	Music.	
J. Pentlow	<i>Team Inspector</i>	Physical education.	
B. Baughan	<i>Team Inspector</i>	English (and Drama); Equal opportunities.	
D. Benstock	<i>Team Inspector</i>	Science.	
V. Elliott	<i>Team Inspector</i>	Religious education.	
T. Osgerby	<i>Team Inspector</i>	History.	
J. Marshall	<i>Team Inspector</i>	Modern foreign languages.	Curriculum.
P. Kendall	<i>Team Inspector</i>	Art.	
C. Elliott	<i>Team Inspector</i>	Information technology.	
N. Cowell	<i>Team Inspector</i>	Special educational needs.	
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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE COLLEGE**

King Edward VI Community College is a large comprehensive school with 1542 students' aged 11-18. There are 325 students in the Sixth Form. In addition, it offers a wide adult education and youth programme for the local community. It is housed in four building complexes. Three of these are on an extensive campus which has a main road running through it. Nearly all students are white, which reflects the local population. They come from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds. The percentage entitled to free school meals is below the national average. Many homes in the area have adults who have experienced higher education. Over 25 per cent of the students on the school roll are in need of some kind of learning support, and nearly 3 per cent (49 students) have statements of special educational need. These figures are above the national average. Overall, the standards pupils achieve on entry is broadly in line with national averages. Since the last inspection in 1996 the college has grown slightly, particularly the Sixth Form where an open access policy is adopted.

### **HOW GOOD THE COLLEGE IS**

This college is effective and efficient. It has many good features. A high proportion of good teaching enables many students to achieve high standards in national curriculum tests at 14, and in public examination at 16 and 18. Since the last inspection, the appointment of a new principal and senior management team is bringing about a significant shift in the ethos of the college. Parental and wider community involvement is actively encouraged. These developments are having a positive impact on standards.

### **WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL**

- benefits from clear leadership from the governors, principal and senior managers;
- focuses on improvement in order to raise standards and extend opportunities for personal development;
- provides some very good and excellent teaching, particularly in art, English, design and technology, music and religious education
- offers an extensive range of extra curricular opportunities, particularly in sport, drama and music;
- develops good relationships with students;
- uses community resources well in order to enhance learning.

## WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

- the effective monitoring of the work of the college to improve consistency in all areas;
- the quality of teaching to the level of the best, particularly in modern foreign languages;
- the development of effective learning policies across the curriculum in information technology, literacy and numeracy;
- the allocation of time and the quality of accommodation to deliver the curriculum more effectively.

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

## HOW THE COLLEGE HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

By far the greatest improvement has been as a result of the appointment of a new principal and senior management team. They are establishing a more open, participative culture with a focus on improvement. This is recognised as producing change that is raising standards. There have been overall improvements in examination results over the last four years, but they have not been consistent and are generally no greater than improvements nationally. The action plan produced by the governors following the last inspection has brought about some changes, but these have often been slow in coming and their benefits are not yet fully evident. For example, there has been significant investment in information technology but the requirements of the National Curriculum are not yet being met. By contrast, there have been significant improvements in music. The development planning process is now effective but monitoring remains an issue. The college is beginning to make better use of assessment but this is not yet sufficiently developed to have a consistent impact on standards. The current curriculum review takes account of the issues raised in the last report about time and accommodation. Overall improvement is satisfactory.

## STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with				<b>Key</b>  <i>well above average</i> A <i>above average</i> B <i>average</i> C <i>below average</i> D <i>well below average</i> E
	all schools			similar schools	
	1997	1998	1999	1999	
GCSE examinations	B	C	C	C	
A-Levels/AS-Levels	D	D	C	N/A	

The percentage of students who achieve five or more passes in the General Certificate of Secondary Education at grades A\*-C is above the national average and above that achieved by similar schools. The average point score, whilst above the national average, is average when compared with similar schools because not so many students achieve 5 or more grades A\*-G as in other schools. This is mainly because of the use of alternative accreditation. There is a small improvement in standards of achievement at 18. Here, individual subject achievement is better than overall national averages would suggest. The college is now making better use of data and has set appropriate targets based on the prior attainment of students. In the General Certificate of Secondary Education examinations this year, it is aiming to achieve 100 per cent five or more A\*-G grades and 57 per cent 5 or more A\*-C grades.

## STUDENTS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the college	The attitudes of most students are good. In the Sixth Form they are very good.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good overall. There is a small minority who disrupt a few lessons where classroom management is less effective.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships are good. This is a strength of the college which helps learning.
Attendance	Attendance overall is satisfactory. Punctuality at the beginning of the day is also satisfactory but, due to the nature of the site, many lessons to start late.

These aspects make a significant contribution to the quality of education and the standards achieved. Students' attitudes are consistently positive, which, coupled with the good relationships which teachers establish, has a beneficial effect upon the quality of learning in the classroom. Poor behaviour is directly linked to ineffective teaching. The college struggles with the issue of punctuality because of the difficulties created by the split site.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of students:	aged 11-14 years	aged 14-16 years	aged over 16 years
Lessons seen overall	Good	Good	Good

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

Teaching is good overall. It was very good or excellent in 36 per cent of lessons. In 92 per cent of lessons observed, teaching was satisfactory or better, and in 67 per cent it was good or better. It was unsatisfactory in 8 per cent of lessons; of these a third were in modern foreign languages. In Key Stage 4, 47 per cent of the teaching is very good or excellent. In English two thirds of the teaching is good or better and much is outstanding, particularly in Key Stage 4. However, there is also a significant proportion of unsatisfactory teaching, due mainly to poor planning. In mathematics, there is no unsatisfactory teaching; the majority is good or satisfactory based on a predominantly didactic approach. In science, teaching is good overall in both Key Stage 3 and 4, with some very good teaching and a little that is unsatisfactory. Strong subject knowledge and well planned lessons are a strength. The significant strength in the teaching is the careful planning to maximise the use of time. At its best, this involves a variety of tasks which create good pace and challenge. Where teaching is weak, as in modern foreign languages, tasks are undemanding and expectations low. Generally the needs of pupils of all abilities are well met. There is no consistent approach to developing information technology, literacy and numeracy skills.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE COLLEGE

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory overall. Good Sixth Form opportunities. The college fails to meet statutory requirements for information technology. Very good extra curricular opportunities.
Provision for students with special educational needs	Satisfactory. Statutory requirements are met. Learning support assistants give good support. Links with parents need improving.
Provision for students' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Personal development is successfully fostered through the personal, social and health education programme. Good use is made of community resources. Provision for spiritual development is satisfactory; for moral, social and cultural development, it is good or better.
How well the school cares for its students	Good level of care and support. The new pastoral structure is beginning to work successfully in monitoring students progress.

The college works well with parents generally and is encouraging wider participation. Support groups have been formed to help develop a number of aspects of college life. Parents' views are regularly sought. The college recognises that its response to parents' concerns is not as good as it might be. The college has a caring and supportive ethos. The monitoring of student's academic and personal development is improving as more assessment data is used effectively. The curriculum meets statutory requirements except in respect of

National Curriculum information technology. The college offers a good, broad curriculum to Sixth Formers, with Advanced Level and vocational courses. It makes very good use of community resources, by way of visiting speakers and visits to enhance the curriculum. A lot of time is wasted because of the split site, and attempts to cut movement cause inflexibility in the allocation of time to subjects.

### HOW WELL THE COLLEGE IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the principal and other key staff	Good. The principal and senior managers work together as an effective team. They have a clear focus on improvement. There is a need, however, for more systematic monitoring of performance at all levels.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governors have a very clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Their committee structure works well in enabling them to discharge their responsibilities and support the school. They meet nearly all statutory responsibilities
The school's evaluation of its performance	This is a developing area. The college is beginning to collect and use data to help it evaluate performance. However, self evaluation is not yet sufficiently embedded in the culture of the college.
The strategic use of resources	Good. Financial planning is focused on the college's educational priorities. The nature of the site and the poor quality of a significant number of buildings is managed well but these features do not help improve efficiency, quality or standards.

The college is adequately staffed. Teachers are well qualified and appropriately deployed. Overall, learning resources are adequate. The number of computers to students is improving and there is a satisfactory provision of texts. Accommodation, however, is poor. Time and resources are wasted because of the split sites. In addition, a third of the accommodation is outdated and/or temporary and directly restricts the quality of education and standards achieved. The governors are to be commended for the feasibility study they have undertaken to bring the college on to one site. They should be vigorously supported by those concerned to raise standards. In all the college's procedures, the principles of best value are evident.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE COLLEGE

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• their children like school;</li> <li>• their children make good progress;</li> <li>• they feel comfortable about approaching the college;</li> <li>• the college expects children to work hard and achieve their best.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The amount of work to do at home</li> <li>• more information about how their children are getting on</li> <li>• working more closely with them; particularly through the Student Planners.</li> </ul>

In addition to the response forms, the registered inspector received nearly 100 extensive written responses. Many recognised and appreciated the changes currently taking place. A significant number expressed concern about unsatisfactory teaching. Inspectors share that concern; even though the percentage is relatively small and is far outweighed by some very good and excellent teaching. There were criticisms about the inconsistent use of Student Planners. Much has been done to work more closely with parents and inspectors can confirm that the will is there, but a lack of monitoring does mean that currently there are teachers and tutors who are not meeting expectations. From the evidence we have seen, we believe that the amount of work being set to do at home is generally satisfactory. We agree that parents and students could receive more information about how they are getting on in their studies.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. Standards on entry are broadly in line with national averages in National Curriculum tests taken at the end of Year 6. The results of standardised tests taken early in Year 7 confirm a broad spread of ability, but also show that there is a strong representation of both very able students and those of lower ability. A significant proportion of students require support in their learning, although most can cope with the demands of the secondary curriculum.
2. At the end of Key Stage 3, at the age of 14, students generally achieve well above the national average in both English, mathematics and science in National Curriculum tests. There are variations from year to year, and in 1999 results dipped, particularly in English. However, taking account of students' average scores over the last four years, both boys and girls achieve well above national averages. In the 1999 tests, science results were well above those achieved in similar schools. Mathematics results were also above those of similar schools, but English results were well below. In those other subjects where teacher assessments are made against set criteria, most students achieve in line or above national averages. In modern foreign languages, the results are below expectation; this was also true during inspection and is a consequence of some unsatisfactory teaching. Standards are above expectation in lessons in English, mathematics, science, history and art. In other subjects they are in line with expectations.
3. Students with special educational needs benefit from extra help with reading and spelling, and make good progress through Key Stage 3, achieving well in relation to earlier attainment. The well above average attainment at Level 6 and above in the core subjects indicates that, overall, students who are above average on entry also make good progress and continue to achieve above expectation at the end of Key Stage 3. Currently the school does not have sufficient data to measure individual progress across Key Stage 3 for all students.
4. For many years, results in the General Certificate of Secondary Education have been above the national average for those achieving five or more A\*-C grades. Since the last inspection, results at this level have fluctuated. They rose last year, having dropped in 1998. However, since 1997 there has been a steady increase in those achieving five or more A\*-G grades as the college has entered more students for the General Certificate of Secondary Education examination. The underlying trend in standards, taking students' average point scores into account, is a rise broadly in line with the rise nationally.
5. In English, English literature and media studies, General Certificate of Secondary Education examination results are above average, although students do not do as well in literature as in their other subjects. Results in mathematics are above the national average. In science, students also achieve above the national average in both double and single award

examinations. However, relative to other subjects, they do not achieve as well. In history and geography, students achieve well above average. Results in religious education are also good and students achieve far better results than in other subjects. Results are well above average in design and technology, information technology and art and design. Last year, results in French improved and were above average. Students achieve in line with the national average in physical education and close to it in German.

6. The overall results in the General Certificate of Secondary Education examinations are in line with similar schools. The percentage of students achieving A\*-C grades is above similar schools. However, achievement at five or above, or one or above, A\*-G grades is below that reached by similar schools. This reflects the fact that a number of students are entered for alternative examinations in some subjects, such as English. These students are generally capable of passes in the General Certificate of Secondary Education examinations. The high quality of teaching in Key Stage 4, with nearly three quarters of lessons judged as good, very good or excellent, makes a significant contribution to the standards achieved. In lessons in all subjects, except modern languages, attainment is judged to be above expectation, and in no subject is it less than would be expected taking account of the age and ability of students.

7. Attainment at Advanced Level has continued to improve since the last inspection, but results still remain below the national average. However, these results need to be placed in context. Unlike other Sixth Forms, a significant cohort of students sit only two Advanced Levels. When judged by an average subject score, the college ranks fourth among other Local Education Authority schools. Many subjects recorded a 100 per cent pass rate last year and in art, English literature, French, music and sociology, students' attainment at grades A and B was in excess of national figures. Attainment on vocational courses presents a mixed picture. Students who completed their courses invariably gained either merit or distinction grades. However, completion rates were disappointing; only 70 per cent of advanced and 56 per cent of intermediate General National Vocational Qualification students completed their courses. Some deliberately delay completion; as they are entitled to do. The attainment of present Sixth Formers is at least in line with national expectations and, in some cases, it is well above this level.

8. Students bring good knowledge and understanding of language when they enter the school. Their spoken English shows that they have a wide knowledge of vocabulary which they can use appropriately to convey ideas clearly and interestingly in lessons such as in English, drama, science and religious education. Most students have sufficient competence in reading to cope with the demands of the curriculum and many read very well, but there is little attempt to work systematically within subjects to improve reading. The development of pupils' literacy is not seen as a whole school responsibility, and departments do not have formal policies so that the skills of reading, writing, listening and speaking are consistently developed and reinforced across subjects. Such a policy is necessary to help raise standards.

9. This is also true for numeracy where standards are satisfactory overall and there is no evidence that a lack of skills hinders access to any part of the curriculum. Number skills are practised at regular intervals as part of mathematics lessons but there are missed opportunities in subjects to develop numerical competence. Some good examples of data analysis skills were seen in sociology in Year 12, where students had to appreciate the conflicting use of statistical information. There were some instances of graphical work in science and, at Key

Stage 3, students were using simple graphs in their practical work. This was extended through Key Stage 4 to drawing lines of best fit and the manipulation of equations. In the Sixth Form, all numerical work seen was at an appropriate standard necessary for Advanced Level work.

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

10. Overall, the attitudes, values and behaviour of students are good and a strength of the college. Students come to lessons with positive attitudes and a willingness to learn. They show interest in their work, sustain concentration and are willing to apply themselves to the tasks set. They ask and answer questions readily, join in discussions and contribute well during lessons. Most students are confident, good-humoured and relaxed. They are generally enthusiastic about lessons, and particularly so where teachers create a stimulating and challenging environment; as, for example, in religious education. They show good perseverance with difficult tasks, as witnessed in art when completing relief letter designs in Year 8 and papier-mâché sculptures in Year 9. They collaborate well when working in groups, particularly in drama and English. In the Sixth Form, students are highly motivated and strongly committed to achieving high standards.

11. The behaviour of the vast majority of students around the college and in lessons is good. Students understand the code of conduct. They socialise well outside the classroom and the atmosphere is generally good-humoured. However, the behaviour of a small minority of students causes disruption in some lessons where classroom management is less effective. Students in Years 8 and 9 expressed irritation that some lessons are often interrupted by the same students. Anti-bullying is given a high priority throughout the college. It is raised in tutorial time, in assemblies and in the personal and social education programme. When any bullying occurs, students feel they can go to someone for help and it will be resolved. Parents confirm this. Students have a sense of loyalty towards the college, and there is very little litter, graffiti or vandalism.

12. Relationships at all levels are good and create a supportive and caring atmosphere in which students feel secure and comfortable. They are valued both as individuals and for their contribution to the daily life of college. They respect each other's feelings and are supportive of each other in lessons. This was particularly evident in religious education and drama lessons. Students are polite and friendly, and welcome visitors into their college.

13. The number of exclusions is about average for a college of this size. The structured approach to dealing with unacceptable behaviour works well so that the ultimate sanction is generally effective. All exclusions are fully documented with detailed evidence. Parents are involved at all stages and generally support the college's approach and methods.

14. Students' personal development is successfully fostered. They think about their own attitudes and about wider social issues as they take part in the personal and social education programme. Many students benefit from participating in drama, sport and musical events within college and further afield or in other extra curricular activities. They can be elected to a House Council, and from there to the College Council. Students take these roles seriously and feel they can make a difference. Many of their suggestions have been acted on by the college. Students respond well in support of a number of international, national and local

charities. Their involvement helps students develop an awareness of the misfortunes and problems of others.

15. Attendance at the college is satisfactory. It is in line with the national average, and unauthorised absence is slightly below the national average. Good liaison with the education welfare officer helps identify problems quickly. Registers are marked accurately morning and afternoon. Punctuality to lessons is unsatisfactory. The split site results in many lessons starting up to ten minutes late as students move between buildings.

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

16. Students benefit from some very good and excellent teaching throughout their time in the college, particularly in Key Stage 4. Over a third of all lessons observed were of this high quality and were particularly evident in English, art, music, design and technology, modern foreign languages and religious education. A further third were good and the majority of others professionally competent. However, a small proportion, less than one in ten, were unsatisfactory. A significant proportion of these were in modern foreign languages and contrasted with some other language lessons that were among the best in the college. The remainder were spread across a range of subjects and age groups.

17. Overall, the quality of teaching is good and contributes significantly to students' learning and the standards they achieve. The college development and in-service training plans focus on enhancing teaching skills, and there are examples of excellent practice upon which to model improvement. Three characteristics stand out in the best teaching as making a significant contribution to students' learning. Firstly, teachers plan their lessons carefully so that students are fully engaged in learning throughout the 70 minute sessions. For example, a Year 7 English lesson planned time for private reading, book reviews, a word test, discussion on a text and written preparation for a larger writing task. Secondly, teachers know their subject and enthuse their students. This dynamic was seen in many lessons, particularly in religious education, art and music. Such lessons have high levels of challenge, which motivates students and creates a positive ethos to learning. Thirdly, in the best lessons there are high but appropriate expectations. A Sixth Form history lesson included a demanding discussion on the moral problems posed by religious change in the sixteenth century. In a Year 10 geography lessons, students were well prepared to understand current trends in British farming. All these characteristics help relationships and classroom management and are evident in these lessons.

18. Where teaching is unsatisfactory or could be better, these features are not strong. For example, in a generally satisfactory Year 8 geography lesson, a brief introduction that failed to make clear the objective of the lessons was followed by routine and low level tasks which made few demands on students, and learning was limited. In modern languages, unsatisfactory lessons are characterised by poor use of time, tasks which are undemanding, and low expectations.

19. Where teaching is good, it takes account of the abilities of differing groups of students and addresses their needs. Most teachers are aware of the special needs of some students and take these into account in the preparation of work and by giving additional support or challenge during lessons. Where students with the greatest deficiencies in their reading are withdrawn from classes to receive additional tuition, this helps to ensure that they make progress. Students with specific learning difficulties make sound progress; particularly in reading and spelling, through small group teaching. All teaching of specific groups of students of lower attainment is satisfactory or better, particularly at Key Stage 4 in English. Good teaching for these students also results in sound learning of number and mathematical skills at both key stages. Students with special needs also make satisfactory progress where they are supported in their classes by a learning support assistant. Some teaching, for example in modern foreign languages, fails to take adequate account of the needs of these students and they make little progress.

20. Many parents expressed concern about the lack of quality, and sometimes quantity, of homework set. During inspection it was judged to be satisfactory, and most students interviewed felt the demands on them adequate and sometimes a burden. However, inconsistencies justify the concerns of these parents.

21. There are some general deficiencies in the quality of teaching in the college. These relate to the teaching of basic skills, including the use of information technology, and to marking and assessment. The lack of whole college policies relating to the teaching of literacy and numeracy across the curriculum results in variable practice. For example, history makes a sound contribution to literacy through the use of key word lists, whereas in geography not all teachers focus sufficiently on vocabulary. In most subjects, the requirements of the National Curriculum for the teaching of information technology are not being met and no whole school strategy is in place. Good use is made of information technology in art and some use in design and technology and religious education, but in other subjects it is inadequate. Marking is inconsistent in quality and usefulness even within subjects. The collecting, collating and use of assessment data to help set targets for individual students, departments or the college, is at an early stage of development. These deficiencies are recognised and being addressed, but current practice is inconsistent and often inadequate.

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

22. Provision in Key Stage 3 meets National Curriculum requirements except for information technology. The arrangements for teaching a second foreign language are unsatisfactory. The current pattern of 20, 70 minute periods per week is too inflexible and does not permit small adjustments of time for individual subjects. As a result, time allocations to subjects are often very different from those nationally. For subjects like history and geography, which have only one period, there are problems of continuity, and the National Curriculum programme is covered only at the expense of depth.

23. In Key Stage 4, the requirements of the National Curriculum are met, except for information technology, where the provision for those not taking the General Certificate of Secondary Education course is inadequate. The college offers the normal range of subjects, and for those for whom this provision is inappropriate, a reduced range of subjects is offered at Certificate of Education level. Some departments are moving to the inclusion of almost all students into the General Certificate of Secondary Education programmes and this is to be commended.

24. In the Sixth Form, the college offers a wide range of courses at Advanced Level and General Certificate of Secondary Education level, together with General National Vocational Qualification courses at intermediate and advanced level. Beyond these courses, there are a number of enrichment opportunities but they are not always taken up by students. The personal and social education course has been reconstructed in order that it might make a greater contribution to social, moral, spiritual and cultural aspects of the curriculum.

25. In many subjects students are taught in ability bands or sets. This helps provide appropriate opportunities to meet their needs. Students with identified learning problems and very low reading ages are taught in small sets throughout the school for part of the curriculum, including English. This enables them to make good progress; particularly with basic skills. In Key Stage 4 many of these students study for alternative examinations in which a high proportion achieve merits and distinctions. However, most are capable of gaining passes in the General Certificate of Secondary Education and the fact that they are not entered could affect their future prospects. As with all students in the college, these students have equal access to all activities, opportunities and events. This is an improvement since the last inspection.

26. Problems relating to the curriculum and its operation were signalled at the time of the last inspection and progress in solving them is slow. For example, the college is one of a relatively small number nationally that does not meet recommendations in respect of the time given to teaching. A wide ranging review of the curriculum and its delivery is currently being undertaken to address recognised deficiencies and plan for pending statutory changes.

27. Extra-curricular activities are a strength of the college; they include sports, cultural activities and a range of visits in England and abroad. They are well supported. There is a strong Duke of Edinburgh group and the school supports charity events. Teachers also give of their time at lunchtimes and after school to support students' learning, particularly for those approaching public examinations.

28. The careers provision is good. Careers education is taught discretely from Year 9. There is an information technology careers programme networked across the college, and the internet provides careers information for all students to access. These facilities are available for student and community use. The college has a good relationship with industry and commerce. The work experience placements for students in Years 10 and 12 are well organised and provide a valuable insight into the world of work. A few Year 12 students undertake work experience in France and Germany. This initiative is ripe for further development.

29. The college has strong links with the community. They play a positive part in the development of all students and add an enjoyable dimension to college life. Every opportunity is taken to bring the community into the college for cultural and social events. Most departments involve experts and guests and arrange visits to support their studies. For example, during inspection, officers and a prisoner from a local prison talked to Year 11 students as part of the crime and punishment module in religious education. The very successful community annexe in the centre of town is the focal point for adult provision, with access to students. Adults have some access to courses within the main college, though the take up is small.

30. The college works very closely with its feeder primary schools and a local special school. The group is well organised and managed, and has its own development plan that supports the work in the individual schools. Regular meetings between senior staff ensure all schools contribute, and curriculum meetings between subject departments are now looking at the work of students across key stages. The English staff, for example, have produced a project which students start in their primary school and finish in Year 7. Similar schemes are being looked at in mathematics and science. Children of all ages also come together for musical productions and primary pupils are invited to the college for a variety of activities. All these initiatives help transition and continuity in learning. The college is working with the special school on an inclusion project.

31. A personal and social education programme raises students' awareness of issues relating to health, drugs, sex, safety and relationships. It is taught on a cross-curricular basis in Key Stage 3, particularly through drama, and in discrete modules in the rest of the college. The programme is co-ordinated well by a senior member of staff. It is an improvement from the previous inspection and is still developing. The use of tutorial time is inconsistent. Some tutors use every minute in a structured and purposeful way to monitor student's progress, address the theme for the week and generally support students. In other groups, this time has a more social emphasis and does not support students' learning or contribute to monitoring their development.

32. The spiritual development of the students, which was an issue in the last inspection, is largely unplanned but satisfactory overall. Assemblies, although orderly and worthwhile occasions, often provide little opportunity for reflection and therefore make little contribution to spiritual development. The greatest contribution comes from religious education, dealing with spiritual matters through the study of world religions. In other subjects, such as art, history, and English literature, good examples were seen of teachers taking opportunities to explore deeper issues about the meaning of life.

33. The college develops a very strong moral sense in its students. Expectations of behaviour are high, and there is mutual trust between students and teachers. Teachers are felt to care about their students as individuals and are respected in their turn. Subjects make a good contribution.

34. Good social skills are developed through collaborative work in a number of subjects: design and technology, science and modern languages among others. A drama lesson enabled students to explore the effect on the family of a member who is seriously ill. Students taking part in exchanges in France and Germany have to learn to adapt to different ways of life, and those on work experience have to adapt to the conditions of the work place. Students develop consideration and care for others through participation in charity events.

35. The school has a good, strong cultural tradition, particularly through art, music, English and drama. It is enriched through community links, visits to art galleries, concerts and the theatre, and through visits to the college of poets, artists, writers, musicians and touring companies. While the emphasis is on Western European culture, other cultures are not ignored. In art music, and design and technology, work was seen relating to non-European cultures'.

### **HOW WELL DOES THE COLLEGE CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?**

36. The college provides a good level of care and support for all its students, which is appreciated by parents and students alike. It gives a high priority to the physical care and well being of its students. There is an effective child protection policy with clear and helpful guidance for staff. A senior member of staff is the designated officer and attends appropriate training. Good, clear policies and guidelines are in place to help ensure the well being of adults and students at all times. Regular fire drills and safety checks on equipment are carried out. The health and safety policy is clear and risk assessments take place.

37. The college has created a caring and supportive ethos. Since the last inspection, the pastoral structure has changed to a system of houses with tutor groups made up of students from all years. There has been a mixed response to this but most recognise the strengths of the system. Where it works successfully, younger students benefit and value the friendship and support of older students, and older students develop a sense of responsibility towards younger students. Committed and experienced heads of house are working hard to help everyone through the transition, and respond very quickly to individual needs and concerns. Generally, teachers and tutors know their students well and have a genuine concern for their progress, welfare and personal well being. Students find their teachers are approachable, accessible, responsive and encouraging. The quality of their relationships is the basis upon which much of the personal support is built, and this contributes to students' confidence and ability to cope with everyday college life. The college is generally a happy place and most students enjoy being there.

38. The college has good systems and procedures for encouraging and maintaining good discipline and behaviour based on a climate of honesty and trust. The code of conduct is well established and considered reasonable by students. This is supported by a system of rewards and sanctions which students generally respond to in a positive and mature manner. The good relationships between students and teachers also contribute to an orderly and calm

atmosphere. Students are confident that if they have a problem, such as bullying, then it will be dealt with quickly and sensitively. The college works with a number of agencies on an inclusion project which is aimed at helping students whose behaviour is causing concern. Various strategies are used to help and support these students to control their actions and minimise the disruption to their and others' learning.

39. The college has satisfactory procedures for monitoring and promoting good attendance. Staff ensure that absences are followed up promptly, and there are clear guidelines for staff to work to. The college works closely with the education welfare service to help students with more persistent attendance problems. As yet, there is little monitoring of whole-college attendance patterns or of the attendance of different groups of students. Nor does the college set itself attendance targets to aim for. The promotion of good attendance is limited.

40. Statutory requirements are met in respect to national curriculum assessments and the requirements of the Code of Practice for students with special educational needs. Public examination requirements are also carefully adhered to. However, not all National Curriculum teacher assessments are secure in, for example, information technology or modern foreign languages. Individual Education Plans for students on the special needs register are generally generic in the targets they set and are not enhanced by subject specific targets so that they are not as useful as they should be. Also records about students with special needs are not easily accessible to all staff and there is no systematic analysis of the progress of these students.

41. The college is in the early stages of systematically monitoring students' academic progress. Better use is made of the assessment data to determine whole college targets, but the use of data to monitor individual progress is only just beginning to evolve. The termly effort grades are a start, but students need more help in identifying their strengths and weaknesses through more consistent teacher marking and assessments. Effort grades are used well to identify under-achieving students who are then offered mentoring to help them improve. Self-evaluation and setting measurable targets for improvement through student reviews are at an early stage of development. Most teachers do, however, readily make themselves available to individual students to help them with their learning.

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

42. Relationships with parents are growing all the time in the improved climate of openness. The college is constantly looking for ways to develop this partnership further. Most parents feel that they are able to approach the college with concerns and appreciate the level of care given to their children.

43. Parents receive good quality information about college life and its approach. The prospectus and annual report from governors are informative and readable, and give parents a good insight into the flavour and philosophy of the college. A regular newsletter keeps parents up-to-date with events, topical issues and news. Letters home are relevant and useful. There are various information booklets to help parents at different stages of their child's college life. These are easy to use and give plenty of common sense advice.

44. Formal reporting to parents is through a termly effort grade for each subject and an annual written report. The full report gives an indication of the attainment of students and whether they are working towards, at or above national expectations. The quality of the comments from subject teachers varies enormously. Many are too general rather than specific to the subject, and do not identify strengths and weaknesses clearly or in a way which could help students improve. As a result some parents feel they are not well informed about their child's progress. This was also a concern at the last inspection and little improvement is evident.

45. As a result of the new climate of openness within the college, there is a greater movement towards involving parents in an effective way. Parents' views are sought through questionnaires and through the newsletter. The home-school contract is firmly established as a statement of intent, and clearly indicates what the college and parents can expect from each other. The Parents' Association has developed from a primarily fund-raising body into an active and articulate group who make a direct contribution to the growing involvement of parents. There are now a number of parent-support groups within the college, and they act as good two-way communication. Through these groups, the college has involved parents in amending some of the information booklets to make sure they give parents the information they need in a format they can use and enjoy. The college is developing the use of the student planners as a means of keeping parents in touch with what their child is learning each term and of his/her progress. The planner should indicate the homework to be completed each night. Parents are complimentary about the principles but complain about the inconsistent use of these planners; particularly the lack of response when they use the book as a means of communicating with tutors and individual subject teachers. Their concerns are often justified.

46. Parents are kept fully informed of incidents relating to behaviour and exclusions, but communication with parents of students with special educational needs is a weakness. The informal contact and communication between the college and home are very good. Staff are very responsive to the individual needs of parents and families, and are prepared to make as many alternative arrangements as necessary to help and support.

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

47. The college is efficiently and effectively lead and managed. The principal has been in post for two years and in that time has restructured the senior management of the college. This is the second year of this team's operation and in that time it has made significant changes, not only to structures but, more significantly, to the ethos of the college. A culture of openness, involvement and self-evaluation is now developing. The team has a clear focus on improvement and the raising of standards and staff, parents and students recognise the benefits that have already been brought about. The management team is very aware of the areas for development and these are reflected in the college development plan. However, too many issues are identified and priorities are not clearly distinguished.

48. There have also been changes in leadership and management at subject and pastoral levels and these are having a positive effect upon standards and quality. For example, in music significant improvement is evident since the last inspection. Also, in modern languages, where a new head of department has begun to monitor teaching and is putting in place strategies to improve quality. Members of the senior management team provide good support to those for whom they have oversight. However, there is no systematic approach by which senior and middle managers are able to effectively monitor the quality of teaching or the implementation of policy. The college does not have a formal appraisal policy for staff and therefore professional development cannot be focussed as effectively as it might on personal development.

49. The governors are highly committed to the college. This is exemplified by the selection procedure they have for the appointment of new governors and the high quality induction of new members. Many were part of the appointment process for the new senior staff and therefore they are very supportive of the changes taking place. Although the strategic vision is not formally articulated as it should be, their commitment to improvement is evident in all their work. They have a very effective committee structure that enables them to work in partnership with the staff and provides a high level of awareness of the strengths and weaknesses of the college. They discharge most of their statutory responsibilities, with the exception of fully implementing National Curriculum orders in respect of information technology. There are also some omissions from the college prospectus and annual report to parents and no daily act of collective worship.

50. Financial planning is very good and is targeted on planned improvements. The bursar is a member of the senior management team and is party to all the discussions that take place in the development planning process. The plan itself shows no costings but cost centres are set up to monitor spending. The college uses specific grants for their intended purposes; including those from a foundation trust. Expenditure is carefully monitored and there is an awareness of emerging patterns, for example, the cost of Sixth Form provision in relation to income. The governors' finance committee works closely with the bursar and principal to ensure effective use of resources.

51. Staffing is adequate and teachers are suitably qualified to meet the needs of the curriculum. Professional development is well planned and linked to college and departmental priorities. Newly qualified teachers are well supported. Learning resources overall are good, and a well managed teachers' resource area produces class and school materials to a high standard, using modern technology. This facility is also a good example of the way the college applies the principles of best value in acquiring high class equipment and services.

52. The nature of the site and the quality of a significant amount of accommodation are detrimental to the quality of provision and the standards of achievement. The governors are rightly concerned about the amount of money that has to be found to run the split sites and maintain unsatisfactory accommodation. Their initiative in producing a feasibility study to rationalise facilities on one site is highly commendable; as are their attempts in the meantime

to pursue grants available. The study acts as a strategic plan for any short term developments that become possible. Meanwhile the quality of life for students and many staff is affected by the split site and in English, design technology and some science lessons, quality and standards are affected by poor facilities. In English, for example, students' work becomes damp and electrical equipment regularly fails to operate.

53. Taking account of the average ability of students on entry, the standards achieved in national tests and examinations at 14, 16 and 18, the college progressively adds value. It deploys staff well and teaching overall is good. This is achieved against a background of difficulties caused by the split sites and poor accommodation in some areas. Careful financial management, targeted at improvement, helps ensure that the college provides good value for money.

## WHAT SHOULD THE COLLEGE DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

54. The areas for improvement identified in the report are all included in the current college development plan. In order to improve further the quality of education and the standards achieved, the governors and senior staff should focus and take action on:

- Improving the effectiveness of monitoring the work of the college to ensure consistency in the raising of standards and the implementation of policies. This should include:
  - \* making clear how assessment data is to be analysed and used to set meaningful targets and to monitor progress at all levels, particularly for individual students;
  - \* making explicit the means by which heads of department and heads of house will monitor the implementation of college policies;
  - \* establishing a manageable pattern of monitoring for senior managers;
  - \* providing appropriate training for managers on performance management.  
(Paragraphs: 3, 21, 31, 40, 41, 44, 45, 48)
  
- Raising the quality of teaching to the level of the best, particularly in modern foreign languages, by:
  - \* ensuring that there is a regular pattern of lesson observation to agreed criteria, with appropriate feedback and support, across all departments;
  - \* making sure that discussion of teaching is a regular feature of departmental meetings in order to help share good practice;
  - \* systematically reviewing schemes of work to ensure that appropriate teaching strategies for all abilities are evident.  
(Paragraphs: 6, 16, 17, 18, 19, 132)
  
- Developing effective learning policies to enhance students' information technology, literacy and numeracy skills. This should include:
  - \* implementing the national curriculum requirements for information technology.
  - \* ensuring that technical language is understood and used accurately in subjects; that students have opportunity to use a range of writing styles, and that there are adequate opportunities for reading and research;
  - \* furthering the work being developed on the use of number across the curriculum.  
(Paragraphs: 8, 9, 21, 22, 126)
  
- Addressing the issues concerning the delivery of the curriculum. This should take account of:
  - \* the recommendations in respect of the length of the school day
  - \* the need for a better balance across subjects for the effective delivery of the National Curriculum
  - \* the importance of rationalising the use of the site and improving accommodation in order to save money and time and improve the quality of provision.  
(Paragraphs: 15, 22, 26, 52, 53)

The governors and senior managers should also consider what action to take to address the following matters raised in the report:

- Statutory requirements in respect of information to be published in the college prospectus and the annual governors' report to parents;  
(*Paragraph: 49*)
- The quality of marking so that students know how to improve;  
(*Paragraph: 21*)
- The quality of annual reports to parents ensuring they indicate what standards their child is achieving;  
(*Paragraph: 44*)
- The need for better communication with parents, particularly in respect of special educational needs.  
(*Paragraph: 45, 46*)

## SIXTH FORM PROVISION

55. Attainment in the General Certificate of Education Advanced Level examinations has continued to improve since the last inspection. It still remains slightly below the national average based on average points score. However, a significant number of students sit only two Advanced Levels, thus reducing the value of this comparison. Nationally, many sit three or more. An analysis of local state secondary schools shows that the college had an average point score of 5.7 points per subject, which places the college in fourth place in the County. A number of subjects recorded 100 per cent pass rates last year, and in art, English literature, French, music and sociology, students' attainment at grades A and B was above national figures. Girls out perform boys. Attainment on vocational courses presents a mixed picture. Students who completed their courses invariably gained either merit or distinction grades. However, completion rates were disappointing; only 70 per cent of advanced and 56 per cent of intermediate General National Vocational Qualification students completed their courses. Some deliberately delay completion, as they are entitled to do.

56. The attainment of present Sixth Formers is at least in line with national expectations and, in some cases, it is well above this level. Sociology students, for example, are achieving high standards. They have a good theoretical understanding and they are able to apply their knowledge to an array of circumstances and offer detailed and compelling explanations of both causes and potential outcomes. Their knowledge and understanding is enhanced by their application of key skills, especially literacy and numeracy. In other subjects, attainment is sometimes limited, partly because opportunities to apply and develop key skills are lost. In a government and politics lesson, for example, students were working on the functions of The Cabinet, but opportunities to research this subject through e-mail and the Internet were not seized. In business studies, although students used spreadsheets for their work in accounts, their levels of prior learning in information technology were below the expected standard, and this restricted their attainment and learning.

57. A broad Sixth Form curriculum is offered, comprising mainly of Advanced Level subjects. In addition to the National Curriculum subjects, Advanced Levels include media and theatre studies, business studies and a range of social sciences. Economics is being phased out. Psychology and sociology are very popular. The academic curriculum is enhanced by the availability of three distinct vocational options, covering art, business and science. The latter is only available at intermediate level, while the other subjects can be studied at both intermediate and advanced levels. General studies and personal and social education courses augment the curriculum. Students also enjoy many opportunities to pursue their interests in sport and the performing arts. All Year 12 students undertake work experience placements, some overseas. Further qualifications can be gained through enhancement courses, such as: Spanish, Young Enterprise, and the Community Sports Leader's Award Scheme, but the take up is relatively low. Though the curriculum is varied, there are comparatively few opportunities for students to develop responsibility towards younger students. Some students work in the community, while others offer help in the college, but this aspect of provision is inconsistent. A few students complain that their individual timetables are light and express a desire to have more to do.

58. The quality of teaching in the Sixth Form is good, though there are elements of unsatisfactory teaching. Teaching is particularly good in sociology, art, design and technology, history, and music. Where teaching is good, staff are prepared to challenge; have high expectations, and prepare lessons well. Learning is enhanced by the nature of the tasks set and informal assessment is effectively used to gauge understanding and direct the pace of lessons. In two very good sociology lessons, students were presented with a series of articles, which they had to analyse. Their literacy and numeracy skills were enhanced by the challenges presented, and the quality of planning allowed them to use the information presented to undertake their own detailed analysis and draw their own conclusions. Less effective lessons were characterised by didactic teaching. In these, challenges were few and lacked rigour and the students became passive agents, rarely involving themselves in the lessons. Some teachers, especially in social sciences and business are rather isolated. There is no clear line management and staff often work in single-teacher departments. Opportunities for these teachers to share ideas and formally discuss issues relating to professional development are restricted.

59. Sixth form provision represents a significant part of the college's activities. The Sixth Form has its own base, with its own management structure. The management of this provision is good. Recent changes in management have created the opportunity for development. There is a clear ethos and a determination to secure further improvements in academic results. Finances are managed well and recent staffing and curriculum changes have further improved the financial efficiency. A significant number of students, between 30 and 40 annually, are successfully assimilated into the Sixth Form. Procedures are being established to allow for the closer monitoring of each student's performance. Currently, the use of value-added data, and the consistent linking of assessment and monitoring to target setting are both at an early stage.

## **COMMUNITY EDUCATION**

60. The college has a firm commitment to the concept of lifelong learning. However, because of the split site locations, the community education programme has historically been seen as a separate and individual service from that offered at the college. Most activities are held at an annexe (known locally as The Mansion) in the centre of the town away from the main college sites. The college's vision is to move towards an integrated approach.

61. Work with young children and families is particularly good, and has a positive effect on those that use it and on the wider community. Young parents are learning parenting skills, how to handle children's behaviour patterns, how to be involved in their child's learning, and how to ask for help. Links between the early years staff and under five groups and primary schools are very good and set strong foundations on which children and parents can grow. This ultimately has a knock-on effect as students and parents progress into secondary education.

62. There is a very good programme for young people aged 13 to 25, with a range of youth clubs and activities to suit many needs. The youth worker is increasingly around the main college site and becoming a face students recognise. The youth enquiry service offers free advice, support and information on both campuses. A lunchtime drop-in surgery is to begin immediately after the inspection, with both the youth worker and college nurse available for any student who needs help or advice. The youth work provision complements the work of the college and is having a positive impact on the learning and social development of the students that take advantage of it.

63. The adult education programme is extensive and well supported. Users are surveyed annually to evaluate the content and success of the courses, and a working group has recently been established to try to determine what non-users would like from the service. Currently there is little sharing of expertise and knowledge between the college and the annexe. The annexe itself is welcoming and is well established as an excellent resource within the town, whilst the Aerial Centre, attached to the main building, provides an excellent forum for display and exhibitions.

64. The college is part of the Totnes Family Policy Group. This group is made up of many sections of the community working together to provide support and advice on relationships. They have organised training and workshops, run regular articles in newspapers and are strongly committed to providing the best care they can for the community.

65. Weekly meetings with community staff are beginning to link the aims of the college with the purpose of community education. The production of 'The Courier', a magazine giving a flavour and insight into life in the college and the wider community, contributes to these aims. The challenge for the college now is to create one identity encompassing learning for all and to continue to explore ways in which there can be a beneficial sharing of expertise and experience for everyone.

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	211
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	51

### *Summary of teaching observed during the inspection*

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
12.3	24.2	30.8	24.6	7.6	0.5	0

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

### *Information about the school's pupils*

#### **Pupils on the school's roll**

	Y7–Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1217	325
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	120	10

#### **Special educational needs**

	Y7–Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	49	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	343	29

#### **English as an additional language**

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	6

#### **Pupil mobility in the last school year**

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	49
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	33

## Attendance

### Authorised absence

	%
School data	91.3
National comparative data	91.0

### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.65
National comparative data	1.10

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

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	122	111	233

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 5 and above	Boys	54	82	81
	Girls	80	76	73
	Total	134	158	154
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	School	58 (82)	68 (71)	67(69)
	National	63 (64)	62 (59)	55(56)
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 6 or above	School	20(63)	42 (52)	32(40)
	National	28(34)	38(36)	23 (27)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 5 and above	Boys	71	91	95
	Girls	87	81	81
	Total	158	172	176
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	School	69(67)	74 (77)	76(69)
	National	64(62)	64(63)	60 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 6 or above	School	39(37)	44(52)	32 (46)
	National	31(30)	37 (37)	28(30)

*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	<b>Year</b>	<b>Boys</b>	<b>Girls</b>	<b>Total</b>
	1999	113	124	237

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	52	102	108
	Girls	81	114	121
	Total	133	216	229
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	56 (47.9)	91(85.8)	97([ ])
	National	47.8(46.3)	88.4(87.5)	93.9(93.4)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	39(35.5)
	National	37.8(37)

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

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

### Attainment at the end of the Sixth Form

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-Level or AS-Level examinations	<b>Year</b>	<b>Boys</b>	<b>Girls</b>	<b>Total</b>
	1999	58	70	128

Average A/AS points score per candidate	For candidates entered for 2 or more 'A'-Levels or equivalent			For candidates entered for fewer than 2 'A'-Levels or equivalent		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	13.6	17.8	16.0 (14.1)	5.1	4	4.9(5.3)
National	17.7	18.1	17.9(17.6)	2.7	2.8	2.8(2.8)

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

<b>Vocational qualifications</b>		<b>Number</b>	<b>% success rate</b>
Number in their final year of studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	10	70
	National	N/A	0

<b>International Baccalaureate</b>		<b>Number</b>	<b>% success rate</b>
Number entered for the International Baccalaureate Diploma and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all they studied	School	N/A	N/A
	National	N/A	82.5

### *Ethnic background of pupils*

	<b>No of pupils</b>
Black – Caribbean heritage	3
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	3
White	1536
Any other minority ethnic group	0

### *Exclusions in the last school year*

	<b>Fixed period</b>	<b>Permanent</b>
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	47	3
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

### *Teachers and classes*

#### **Qualified teachers and classes:**

##### **Y7–Y13**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	91.1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

#### **Education support staff:**

##### **Y7–Y13**

Total number of education support staff	23
Total aggregate hours worked per week	667

#### **Deployment of teachers:**

##### **Y7–Y13**

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	76.9
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#### **Average teaching group size:**

##### **Y7–Y11**

Key Stage 3	22.22
Key Stage 4	19.13

### *Financial information*

Financial year	<b>1998/1999</b>
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	<b>£</b>
Total income	3928430.00
Total expenditure	3966585.00
Expenditure per pupil	2643.00
Balance brought forward from previous year	70970.00
Balance carried forward to next year	32815.00

*Results of the survey of parents and carers*

**Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out	1217
Number of questionnaires returned	427

**Percentage of responses in each category**

	<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>Tend to agree</b>	<b>Tend to disagree</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>Don't know</b>
My child likes school.	29	58	9	3	0
My child is making good progress in school.	35	52	9	1	3
Behaviour in the school is good.	21	57	11	2	9
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	16	51	23	7	2
The teaching is good.	18	57	12	2	11
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	14	47	29	8	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	36	49	9	4	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	38	48	10	1	3
The school works closely with parents.	12	45	30	7	5
The school is well led and managed.	21	49	10	5	15
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	26	53	10	3	8
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	23	46	13	6	12

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

### **ENGLISH**

66. Students enter the college with standards that are in line with national averages. They have good knowledge of vocabulary and are able to express themselves clearly, using the structures of standard English. There is a range of competence in reading and writing, from some who are very accomplished to a substantial minority whose skills are well below the level expected for their age, but most are well placed to cope readily with the demands of the secondary curriculum.

67. Standards at the end of Key Stage 3 are good. Results of the most recent tests for 14-year olds, are in line with national averages but well below average for similar schools. However, when performance in the tests over the last four years is considered, the college's results are well above national averages and compare favourably with those of similar schools. Inspection evidence also shows that students in Year 9 have made good progress in English. They have developed as confident speakers. Those with poor reading levels on entry have benefited from extra tuition from the special needs department, and all students have increased the scope of their writing to include a range of forms and styles. Standards of accuracy of expression are good.

68. At the end of Key Stage 4, attainment is above national averages. GCSE English results in the higher grades A\* - C are regularly above average, and in 1999 they were well above average. However, the numbers of candidates taking the examination is significantly lower than the average nationally, an issue that was raised in the last inspection report. Many of those currently sitting alternative examinations are capable of achievement at the General Certificate of Secondary Education examination. Results in English literature and media studies are also regularly above average. Standards in lessons are good

69. Results in English and in media studies in GCE Advanced Level have for many years been above national averages and it is very rare for students to fail the examination. Both subjects are popular among the students and English particularly attracts large numbers. The study of literature in earlier key stages prepares students well for the required analytical and critical approach. Oral and written standards during the course are very high.

70. Students bring good knowledge and understanding of language when they enter the college. Their spoken English shows that they have a wide knowledge of vocabulary which they can use appropriately. When they have opportunity they are articulate; able to convey ideas clearly and interestingly. Many of them read very well, but there are a substantial number whose skills are well below what is expected for their age; for these, writing also presents considerable problems. Students are given good structured opportunities to develop their literacy skills within English lessons.

71. In two thirds of lessons teaching is good or very good and in Key Stage 4 some of it is outstanding, generating learning of very high quality. There is also a significant proportion, just over 10 per cent, that is unsatisfactory. The strongest teaching seen was precise in its planning, with clear objectives that were obvious to the students. Expectations were high and the activities were varied, challenging and stimulating. For example, a seventy minute lesson for Year 7 students allowed time for private reading, followed by oral book reviews, a vocabulary and spelling test, a discussion about the most dramatic moments in 'Macbeth' and, finally, closely guided preparation to create a newspaper front page describing the events, with interviews and comment. A class following the Certificate of Achievement course in Year 11, including students with special educational needs, considered the parallels of power and corruption in 'Richard III' and 'The Godfather'. Video clips were used to stimulate a discussion which fully involved the students, enhancing their speaking and listening skills as well as their critical perception.

72. Where the teaching was weak, lessons lacked planning, pace and purpose; the teachers concerned did not actively involve the students, who lost concentration well before the end of the lessons. This was particularly evident in two lessons in the Sixth Form. More generally, the department needs to consider its policy and practice for assessing students' work: there are examples of very good marking of written work, but there is also marking that gives very little detailed indication of strengths and weaknesses.

73. The English course is very well planned in both key stages and in the Sixth Form. It meets National Curriculum requirements in all respects, except in the teaching of relevant aspects of information technology. The department gives a good range of opportunities for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, in the consideration of issues that arise from the study of literature, and in the activities it provides outside lesson time – such as trips to the theatre and the mounting of poetry exhibitions in the town. The department has gone some way towards addressing the issues raised in the last report which noted that there was insufficient literature taught in the small classes for lower attainers. This is no longer the case, and the department has made progress in integrating more students with reading and writing problems into the mainstream classes in Key Stage 3, although in Key Stage 4, there are still two classes in each year that are not following a General Certificate of Secondary Education course. There are considerable problems, outside the department's control, caused by the timetable arrangements: more than one third of the classes in Key Stage 3 are taught by more than one English teacher, causing serious difficulties in continuity.

## **Drama**

74. Standards in drama lessons in all parts of the school are high. From the beginning of Year 7 students begin to acquire not only the technical competence they need for success in drama, but also the self-control and the interpersonal skills to underpin the collaborative work. Students in a class in Year 7 were learning, through a range of activities, to respond

quickly to gesture, facial expression and the spoken word, to tell stories and to listen and analyse as audience. By Year 9, students are making good use of discussion time to negotiate and prepare presentations. A class working on a unit that explores parent-child relationships responded intelligently to a poem by Roger McGough and produced, by the end of the lesson, a series of tableaux of different aspects of a boy's identity.

75. At Key Stage 4 students may choose drama as one of their examination subjects in the General Certificate of Secondary Education. Results are in line with national averages. Work seen in lessons was of very high quality. Students showed themselves able to respond quickly to stimulus, with competent mime skills, and the presentations – the results of planning over a period of several lessons – were of very high quality. Equally impressive were the students' analytical responses to the work of their colleagues in other groups. These showed very good understanding of the purpose and message of the pieces, and of the skills used.

76. The department also offers theatre studies as a GCE Advanced Level course. Here results overall are in line with, and sometimes above, national averages, although in the last two years the proportion of students reaching the higher grades has been below national averages.

77. Teaching and learning in the subject are of good quality overall, with some outstanding work seen in Year 11. It is the philosophy of the department to develop independence and self-discipline in the students and to explore, through drama, issues that are important in their lives. This makes a significant contribution to students' personal development. There are strong links with the wider community, for instance taking productions by younger students into local primary schools, and providing a drama club which primary pupils can join. Older students gain great benefit from the Ariel Arts Centre based in the college, which gives them opportunities to see professional work, and visiting performers often provide special workshops for the students. In college productions, the students take responsibility for important parts of the work, such as stage management and costume, often with minimal help and intervention from staff.

78. In the last inspection report the department was urged to strengthen links with the music, art and English departments. It has responded well, both in practical productions and by bringing in professional companies to enhance work in English and drama.

## **MATHEMATICS**

79. In the 1999 national tests at the end of Key Stage 3 results were above national averages when compared with all schools, and with similar schools. The difference in attainment between boys and girls was greater than the national difference and boys achieve a higher average points score than girls. The attainment of students in the current Year 9 closely matches these results.

80. Results in the 1999 General Certificate of Secondary Education examinations were above national averages. When compared to similar schools, these results were also above the national average. Girls achieved a higher percentage of A\*-C grades than boys and the difference was greater than that nationally. The attainment seen in the current Year 11 students matches these results, but more students are being entered for the higher level of examination papers in this year group. The percentage of students entered is also high when compared to national figures; this is a reflection of the work of the department in providing a suitable curriculum for all students.

81. Students' results in the 1999 General Certificate of Education Advanced Level examinations were below the national average for those achieving grades A and B, and slightly below the national figure for those achieving grades A-E. The open access to the modular courses enables a range of options to be studied. This allows students to choose the combinations of papers that are best suited to their needs and prior ability.

82. The trend in attainment over time at both key stages shows an increase slightly above the national increase, with some minor fluctuations. Attainment on entry is about the national average, and is above by the end of Key Stage 3, indicating that good progress has been made. When the Key Stage 3 results for similar groups of students are compared to their results at the end of Key Stage 4, the percentage of A\*-C grades is greater than the percentage of students gaining Level 6. Therefore the department also adds value at this stage. Some good examples of high attainment were seen at Sixth Form level, where students studying further mathematics had a high degree of involvement and application.

83. There is a draft policy within the department for the reinforcement of numerical skills within mathematics lessons. These skills are practised at regular intervals as part of teaching. There is no evidence that a lack of numeracy skills hinders access to any part of the curriculum but there is no whole school policy for developing these skills and no audit of particular skills required by other subjects has been made.

84. Progress is good at both key stages and in the Sixth Form. At Key Stage 3, higher attaining students plot points and draw straight-line graphs; by the end of the key stage they draw curved graphs and manipulate the algebraic form of the equations. A Year 8 class investigating a variety of straight line graphs used graphical calculators and drew accurate conclusions on the gradient of the line, the intercept on the y axis and the form of the equation. At Key Stage 4, the higher attaining students develop these skills to solve a range of quadratic equations using different techniques. Lower attaining students become more confident with their numerical work during Key Stage 3, and reinforce that with work on angles and polygons. This work is extended through Key Stage 4 to introduce algebra and to be able to form and solve linear equations. This was evident in a Year 10 lower attaining class, who investigated polygons and found a rule connecting the lines needed with the points required in words, and then expressed the rule in algebraic form.

85. Student's attitudes to learning throughout mathematics lessons are good. Students arrive at their lessons enthusiastic and ready to work and sustain their concentration throughout the time available. They make positive contributions to discussions and readily answer questions posed by their teachers. They also ask for help knowing that it will readily be given. Lower attaining students' positive attitude is helped by their being in a small group that gives them the support necessary to improve. Higher attaining students readily discuss

with each other and provide mutual support and encouragement. This was very evident in the graphical calculator lesson, where higher attaining students were reluctant to stop work at the close of a session.

86. Teaching is at least sound in all lessons; in half of them it is good and small proportion very good. All teachers have good subject knowledge and understanding. This enables them to plan and deliver lessons that capture the imagination of the students. Teachers' planning ensures that lessons are well structured and delivered in manageable sections in a clear, precise manner. This results in good standards of discipline and control, as students are suitably challenged throughout lessons. There is a good balance between teacher exposition, discussion and practice. This good management of time sustains the concentration and interest of classes. However, the questioning of pupils is, on some occasions, rather closed. This hampers the development of logical and enquiring thought. Teachers' high but not unrealistic expectations of their students, give a sound degree of challenge to lessons and are encouraging as the students recognise that the targets for the lesson are achievable. Teaching is mainly didactic in style, with expositions illustrated by examples on the whiteboard. There is little use of any other teaching aids. Two practical lessons were seen where students were actively involved in the learning process and, as a result, the learning was good. Teachers' marking is inconsistent; some offer encouraging comments but little advice on how to improve. There is a departmental scheme to centrally record marks of tests and coursework, which are used to monitor progress. This is used efficiently.

87. The head of department is an experienced leader who provides good direction to the department by utilising the strengths of each individual. The cohesive, co-operative nature of all the teachers has helped develop the work of the department in all aspects. Students' development is not hindered when classes have to be taught by more than one teacher. The introduction of a new textbook in Year 7 to replace the individualised scheme that was used previously is having a positive effect on standards, and there are plans to extend this to Year 8 in the next year. The department is housed mainly in temporary buildings that are adequate for the purpose, but not all teachers are on the same site.

88. The issues raised in the last report have been addressed and many other developments have taken place. The scheme of work is now being revised to take into account the new textbook in use. A development plan is in place and the use of computers is to be further integrated into the curriculum, as is more numeracy work. There is a commitment to sustaining and raising the standards even higher.

## **SCIENCE**

89. Standards of attainment overall are good. At the end of Key Stage 3, in 1999, the average level for all students was well above the national average, and well above that of students in similar schools. The percentage of students gaining Level 5 or more was above national average, and the percentage gaining Level 6 or more was well above. At the end of Key Stage 4, the average grade in the General Certificate of Secondary Education was above the national average. The percentage of students gaining grades A\*-C was also above the national average. In comparison with schools with students from a similar background, the performance was well above average. Results in the double award combined science, which is taken by about two thirds of the students, are very good, and in the single award, taken by

the remaining one third, the results are still above average. In the Sixth Form, Advanced Level results in 1999 represented a good cross section of grades from A to E in all three sciences, with an impressive proportion at the higher end. The relatively small number of students studying the General National Vocational Qualification course gained satisfactory accreditation in their assessments.

90. The standard of work currently carried out by students at the end of Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 mirrors the examination results of the previous year. For example, in Year 9, a majority of students make reliable observations, analyse them carefully, and draw sensible conclusions. A higher than average number of students focus on accuracy in their practical work and evaluate data well. They show knowledge and understanding as they compare results with their predictions. In Year 11, for example, students have a good depth of knowledge of chemical compounds, and understand the effects of chemical emissions on global warming and other areas of the environment. In the Sixth Form, the students follow appropriate Advanced Level courses, which stimulate good discussion and foster understanding of relevant applications of the sciences.

91. The standards in Key Stage 3, Key Stage 4 and the Sixth Form have remained consistent over the past four years. There has been no significant variation in the achievement of boys compared with girls. The progress of students with special educational needs is in line with other students particularly when an appropriate level of support has been provided. Students with exceptional aptitude, however, are not sufficiently extended towards higher grades on entry to the college, the students are broadly in line with national expectation as judged. On their observed knowledge and understanding of science in Year 7, and on their cognitive ability test scores. Over Key Stage 3, progress is good, raising the attainment to above the national average, and this progress is maintained at a satisfactory rate over Key Stage 4. In the Sixth Form, in biology and chemistry particularly, students increase their knowledge and understanding of scientific concepts, and develop their experimental skill very effectively.

92. The majority of students in the college have a positive attitude towards their work. They complete tasks with care, and behave well in class. In experimental investigations, they collaborate with others well. A small minority exhibit poor behaviour, which has a detrimental effect on the learning in some sets. A significant number of students in many classes are reluctant to participate actively in class discussion or to ask questions that would extend their understanding.

93. Teaching in science is good overall in both Key Stage 3 and 4. In half of the lessons, teaching quality is good or very good, and in the majority of others it is satisfactory. Only one lesson was unsatisfactory. In the sixth form, the majority of lessons are very good. In general, good teaching is being achieved by staff, who have strong subject knowledge, and who develop an excellent relationship with students in their classes. They maintain a good pace of learning, provide original ideas, and use a variety of methods. Resources are used well and homework is productive. Where teaching is less effective, the daily planning is not sufficiently rigorous to provide work that matches the needs of the higher, or the lower attaining students, including those with special educational needs. The use of information and communication technology is minimal, and insufficient to provide the appropriate opportunities for development of skills other than word processing. On occasions, time is not used well, with inappropriate balance of activity. Poor behaviour by some students is

sometimes allowed to develop, and this affects the progress of others. Marking of books is regular, but does not provide enough guidance for students to know how to improve their work. Detailed assessment data is insufficiently analysed to identify underachieving students and set targets for future attainment.

94. The department is aware of weaknesses and staff are working together to improve standards further. Schemes of work are regularly reviewed and good use is made of the considerable expertise of subject specialists. Work is in hand to use assessment data more effectively. Sixth form courses have been introduced as a result of extensive curriculum evaluation. The departmental management is strong, with leadership responsibilities devolved by subject and across each key stage. Good support is provided for newly qualified teachers and all staff contribute through regular meetings. There is, however, insufficient monitoring of the quality of teaching and subsequent identification of in service training needs. Learning support assistants for students with special educational needs are not used as well as they might be. The accommodation creates difficulties but is adequate. It does have an adverse affect on the quality of practical work. Laboratories, some in need of refurbishment, are on three separate sites, which leads to problems in sharing resources.

95. Since the last inspection, the good standards of attainment have been maintained and the overall quality of teaching continues to be good. However, the department has not yet sufficiently addressed issues raised at the time. The need for further development of planning of work that matches the full range of attainment continues to be an issue. Assessment procedures are still not used well enough to show students how to improve. The use of information and communication technology remains inadequate, although some changes in provision have been made. Governors have not yet addressed aspects of accommodation that continue to have a negative impact on the quality of learning.

## **ART**

96. Standards in Key Stage 3 are mostly higher than expectations, both during and at the end of the key stage. Some work is well above expectations, as seen in screen-prints in Year 9, where excellent teaching and organisation enabled students to develop high quality prints in both design and execution.

97. In Key Stage 4, attainment ranges from above to well above expectations. Standards seen are consistent with the very good examination results that students have gained in recent years. Visual research, good quality drawing and technical skills enable students to produce many examples of powerfully expressive imagery, for example, in response to the theme of 'Conflict' developed in a Year 10 class.

98. In the Sixth Form standards are above expectations for both the Advanced level and General National Vocational Qualification courses. Some Advanced Level work is well above expectations. The percentage of A - B grades gained in 1999, including the now discontinued ceramics course, was slightly below the national average. There are many examples of individually expressive work. This is often large-scale and made visually powerful by highly developed skills and thinking.

99. The strengths in students' achievements in all year groups are their good skills in a wide range of materials and processes. They use art forms well to explore and express individual ideas and feelings. They have a good knowledge and understanding of art in our own and other times and cultures. This was seen in work in Year 7 with African masks, and in Year 12 with Cubist compositions. Students often use information technology, including the Internet, to investigate topics and enhance presentation.

100. In all key stages teaching is good or very good. In Key Stages 3 and 4, some excellent teaching was seen. Only one unsatisfactory lesson was seen. Lessons are well prepared and planned, and are often highly paced and productive. Teachers create a purposeful, creative ethos in lessons and students enjoy the challenges they set. A strength of all of the teaching is the high quality of individually tailored support that students receive during practical activities. This is detailed and demanding and empowers students to develop their own thinking and skills. Students of all levels, including those with special educational needs learn successfully and make progress. By the Sixth Form nearly all students are able to work autonomously, selecting and developing their own areas of interest in art.

101. Teachers work closely as a team, sharing common aims. Studios are well-organised and stimulating places for creative work. Since the previous inspection standards have risen, and homework is more structured. While boys' attainment in art is above national levels, it is generally below girls' attainment.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

102. Standards at Key Stage 3 are very good. The number of students achieving Level 5 or above at the end of the key stage is higher than the national average. Students work with a range of materials and experience a variety of tasks. They gain knowledge and understanding through focused practicals and design and make activities. Practical skills are well developed and products are of a high quality. Sometimes in Years 7 and 8, students are constrained by over prescription in the task, which prevents them from displaying originality in their work. The level of planned information technology in the work is insufficient.

103. Standards at Key Stage 4 are very good. Examination results have been above national average for a number of years. There is however, some discrepancy between the achievement of girls and boys. Boys achieve better results in design technology, than they do in their other subjects but girls achieve less well than in their other subjects. Students are particularly good at generating ideas, research, and specification and in evaluating their product against the original specification. The amount of information technology used is limited.

104. In the Sixth Form, standards are high, with students achieving above the national average for grades A-D at Advanced Level. Particular strengths include the quality of model

making, the building of prototypes and the production of highly innovative design solutions, some of which are outstanding. Students interact very well with each other and with their teachers; discuss their ideas; make suggestions for improvements, and evaluate their own and the work of others. The contribution of information technology to the work is satisfactory, but most of it is done at home.

105. The quality of teaching is very good across all key stages and is the main factor in the high standards achieved. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed. Teachers are knowledgeable about their subject and communicate this well to their students. They are enthusiastic and plan interesting activities which, coupled with high pupil expectation, result in above average outcomes. Examples of these include the speciality cakes made in Food, and the tables made in Resistant Materials. Students are taught to develop their creative skills, as was shown by confectionery packaging made in Graphic Products and the unique waistcoats made in Textiles. Teachers give unstintingly of their time, both in and out of school hours. This facility is particularly valuable to students undertaking practical coursework. They are encouraged to think for themselves and to produce items of high quality which display originality. Examples include the multi-media projects in Resistant Materials and the examination work done in Textiles, which show flair and imagination. This would not be easy to achieve within the constraints of the timetable. Students respond to the challenges, which are offered to them with interest and show a desire to do well. Good work is put on display, which serves to push up standards and to celebrate achievement. Students concentrate on their work and are willing to persevere when difficulties arise. The relationships, which exist between teachers and students, are generally harmonious and promote a pleasant learning atmosphere.

106. An additional factor, which impacts positively on standards, is the work of the two departmental technicians, who prepare resources and maintain the practical areas to a safe standard. Classroom assistance for those with special educational needs is effective where it occurs, but is insufficient in some cases. The very poor accommodation and the lack of use of information technology are having a limiting effect on what can be achieved by students.

107. There has been improvement since the last inspection. Standards have risen across all key stages. There is an improved Key Stage 3 course, which still needs further modification to include those elements of systems and control currently lacking. The percentage of the cohort now being entered for examination is above national average. Health and Safety issues have been addressed as far as the present accommodation will allow. The pace of lessons in Key Stage 3 is satisfactory. Although a bid has been made for extra funding to replace the current outdated and dilapidated accommodation, the outcome is uncertain. The matter of storage therefore has also not been resolved.

## **Child development**

108. Up until the last two years, standards in this subject were good, relative to the abilities of the students. However, long term staff absence has had a detrimental effect on standards. In the last two years, they have fallen below the national average owing to a lack of continuity in teaching. Currently, a high percentage of the students who opt to take Child Development are entered for a Certificate of Achievement. They are capable of taking a General Certificate of Secondary Education examination. Standards observed during the inspection for both teaching and learning were satisfactory for students of all abilities, but lessons lacked sufficient pace for good progress to be made.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

109. Standards at Key Stage 3 are in line with what is expected. Attainment in the General Certificate of Secondary Education examination in 1999 was well above the average for all secondary schools, There has been an improvement, despite some fluctuations, in examination performance during the period 1996 to 1999. All students gained A\*-G grades in 1999, which is above the national figure. Geography examination results in 1999 were the fourth best in the college. Girls' attainment is better than that of boys but this is in line with national trends; both attain above national averages. Attainment in Advanced Level examinations is well above national averages. Results have improved steadily in the last three years. Boys and girls perform at broadly similar levels.

110. Inspection evidence confirms attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is in line with national expectations. Students learn skills such as map work in Year 7. In Year 9, many know how to make links between human activity and physical features in explaining why soil erosion is so prevalent in Nepal and in suggesting solutions. However, a number of students of lower ability have weak recall and some find it difficult to explain geographical patterns. Inspection confirms that student attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is well above expectations. Year 11 students have good recall of work and can answer questions on topics like agriculture confidently. They show some weaknesses in knowledge of place. However students have good skills using atlases. In lessons, Sixth Form students' attainment is also above expectations, students in Year 13 showed good understanding of the factors governing planning decisions applied to building a proposed by-pass. They have a good grasp of the techniques for weighing economic and environmental arguments.

111. Teaching is satisfactory overall. In nearly two thirds of lessons it is good and in the majority of others satisfactory. At Key Stage 3 teaching is satisfactory but not consistent. Where it is good, teachers have good knowledge of their subject; work is suited to the needs of students; students are well managed, and lessons have a purposeful air. Such lessons have a good range of interesting activities to help maintain interest and pace. Where teaching has weaknesses, expectations are too low and there is a lack of consistent 'drive' within the classroom, which hampers progress. A Year 8 lesson on erosion had clearly expressed aims, which started the lesson effectively, but the pace was slack and the teacher's brief explanation at the start of the lesson lacked clarity. The subsequent task was routine and needlessly repetitious, giving few opportunities for learning to develop. Students' attitudes to the subject are usually good, although when they are bored many can become talkative. They are obedient and usually start lessons energetically, although this work-rate falls if the lesson is

not stimulating. Teaching is a major factor in the rate of learning being only satisfactory, compared to the better progress further up the college. The allocation of time is below what is nationally recommended and is a further negative factor.

112. Teaching at Key Stage 4 is satisfactory but there are, again, inconsistencies. All teachers have good subject knowledge and awareness of the demands of the examination curriculum. They manage students satisfactorily. Where lessons have weaknesses, these include a lack of variety of activities and uninteresting expositions which lead to a decline in the pace of learning. Failure to adapt tasks to the wide range of abilities found in some classes leads to those of low attainment having difficulty. It also presents insufficient challenge for high attaining students. In good lessons, teachers have high expectations of students' academic performance, and their enthusiasm helps to propel progress. A very good Year 10 lesson with these qualities ensured that all made very good progress in understanding the trends in British farming. Students react to the subject with maturity, and show good focus on the task in hand. The quality of students' attitudes and behaviour has a significant impact on the pace of students' learning. As a result, overall learning in Key Stage 4 is good.

113. Teaching in the Sixth Form is good. It is characterised by good subject knowledge and friendly relationships. Teachers have high expectations, and Year 12 students, in an early part of their course, are given precise guidance to help develop their essay writing techniques. In a good Year 12 lesson, students worked in pairs, planning an area of study to a closely defined brief, and using the accessible and interesting resource booklet provided by the school. All were able to develop their skills, checking with the teacher from time to time. Students respond well to this approach, working with energy and application. Their rate of learning is good. They start the course with varying levels of prior knowledge and, by Year 13, students develop the breadth of knowledge, understanding and skills required to succeed. The pace of Sixth Form learning is good.

114. The curriculum is well planned with a good range of local fieldwork integrated into schemes of work. However, the time allocated is insufficient, and further time is lost because of lateness to lessons due to the nature of the site. The department does not plan delivery of literacy and numeracy through its curriculum, so provision is inconsistent, although some teachers emphasise geographical vocabulary in their lessons. Insufficient information and communications technology is taught through the subject. The pattern of assessment of geography is satisfactory, but results are not recorded centrally so cannot be analysed to feed back into the classroom. Teaching and marking are not monitored by the head of department; this leads to inconsistencies of practice. The department maintains a strong focus on external examination performance.

115. Since the last inspection student attainment at Key Stage 4 and in the Sixth Form has improved. The provision of information technology and the weaknesses in assessment have not been fully addressed.

## HISTORY

116. The standards of work in history are good. Students at Key Stage 3 are achieving in line with national averages and some well above. At Key Stage 4, results are above the national average. The percentage gaining A\*-C grades was above the national average with a creditable number achieving A\* grade. At Advanced Level, results are also above the national average. In 1999, nearly all candidates gained a pass grade and nearly a third were awarded Grades A and B.

117. Student attitudes to the subject are good in both key stages and in the Sixth Form. They are fully involved in the lessons, with good levels of concentration and interest. Good examples of this were seen in the Year 11 lessons on the Holocaust, leading students to consider moral issues. Students have a good understanding of chronology, and link cause and effect well, as was shown in Year 9 lessons on World War I. Behaviour in the classroom is good overall, with students remaining on task.

118. The quality of teaching is good. The teachers have good subject knowledge and lessons are well planned. There are high expectations of students, as shown by a Sixth Form discussion lesson which centred effectively on the moral problems posed by religious change in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century. There is good classroom control, and appropriate teaching methods ensure that students learn well, with teachers giving good support to learning. There are satisfactory classroom displays of students' work and resources are adequate. There is only limited use of information and communications technology. The use of keywords makes a satisfactory contribution to the skills of literacy, but students have few opportunities to read in class. Books are regularly marked and a satisfactory amount of homework is set. There are appropriate extra-curricular activities organised for each year group, ranging from Roman Bath in Year 7 to Eastern Europe in the Sixth Form.

119. The leadership and management of the subject are good, with frequent consultations, although there is little monitoring and evaluation. The department continues to build on the good practice commended in the last report. The two key points for action have been addressed. Learning activities now provide appropriate challenges for students of all attainments. Students with special educational needs have tasks matched appropriately to their attainment, with limited support from classroom learning assistants. To extend higher attaining students, there is an effective 'fast track' group in Key Stage 4, which allows students to take the General Certificate of Secondary Education in half the usual time allocation. In 1999, these students achieved half the A\* Grades awarded overall. The link between assessment and learning in the National Curriculum is now much clearer, and students are more aware of their progress.

120. There is some adverse effect on learning caused by time loss in lessons due to problems of student movement. In Key Stage 3, a single weekly lesson causes problems of continuity and some constraints on teaching. The accommodation is unsatisfactory, being scattered and badly in need of refurbishment. Overall, the department is a good one, as shown by its results.

## INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

121. Standards in information technology on entry to the school broadly match national standards. In years 7 and 8, where the subject is taught in discrete lessons, students acquire a good range of skills in word-processing, graphics and the use of spreadsheets. They do not, however, have opportunity to cover all aspects of the Key Stage 3 National Curriculum; therefore statutory requirements are not met in National Curriculum teacher assessments at the end of Year 9, students achieve above expectation. Boys do better than girls.

122. In Key Stage 4, about one quarter of the students successfully take a General Certificate of Secondary Education examination. In 1999, nearly three quarters achieved grades A\*-C, a figure little different from results in similar examinations in previous years and well above the national figure. All students entered gained a grade in the range A\*-G. For those not taking General Certificate of Secondary Education there is some development of previously acquired skills. There is, however, little evidence of use in other subjects, except for some good work in art and music. Assessment at the end of Key Stage 4 is primarily based on the results of end of year tests, which are not sufficiently related to the criteria in the National Curriculum.

123. There is no explicit information technology examination in the Sixth Form. Students taking business education make satisfactory use of information technology.

124. Teaching in all lessons is most often good or very good. It is never less than satisfactory. In Key Stage 3, teaching is always good. Lessons are generally planned to include a clear introduction of a new topic or skill, followed by individual work using computers. This pattern enables all students, including those with special education needs, to learn and make good progress since they can practise what they have learnt at their own pace. Its extensive use does not, however, give sufficient opportunity for students to work productively together, or discuss some of the social, economic, ethical and moral issues raised by new technology. Students are keen to learn and they behave well. In Key Stage 3, the tasks students are asked to carry out are not generally related to their work in other subjects and this can lead to some lack of motivation.

125. The posts of information technology co-ordinator and assistant co-ordinator are currently vacant and there is no-one who can take an overview of the application of information technology across the college. Although some departments, such as art and music, make good use of Information technology, departments do not have responsibility for aspects of the curriculum and there is no system for recording centrally students' attainment in these subjects

126. Since the last inspection there has been a marked improvement in provision but the limited access to computer suites severely restricts the access of subject departments. In particular the lack of space for the technicians means that they have to work in computer rooms. This can be a safety hazard and a distraction for students. Although information

technology is taught in Years 7 and 8, all aspects of the National Curriculum are not covered. There are no central records of students' attainment nor portfolios of their work. There has been some staff training in the use of Information technology, but little discussion of its use in various subjects. The college does not have an overall strategy for the implementation of information technology in all subjects.

## **MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

127. At the end of Key Stage 3 the proportion of students reaching Level 4 or above is below the national average. The results for boys are worse than those for girls, and German is weaker than French. Standards in modern foreign languages are worse than those in other subjects of the curriculum.

128. In Key Stage 4 the proportion of students obtaining A\*-C grades in the General Certificate of Secondary Education has varied considerably over the last three years. The results in French and German in 1997 were very good, particularly in German, but they were based on a restricted entry. When, in 1998, a much higher proportion was entered, the proportion obtaining grades A\*-C fell to below national levels. In 1999, there was a further slight decline in German, but in French the proportion gaining grades A\*-C rose to well above the national average. This was due in part to a decision by French teachers to change to course work assessment. In the last two years, the average point score has been very close to the national average, except for French where, in 1999, students obtained the equivalent of half a grade higher. The proportion of students gaining grades A\*-G has been within a percentage point of the national average. In spite of some recent improvement, students do less well in modern foreign languages than in most other school subjects. Boys perform worse than girls. The difference is greater in German than in French.

129. The number of students taking Advanced Level French and German varies from year to year. The results have been very good. In 1999, six out seven candidates for French obtained A or B grades; in German six out of 16 did the same.

130. Attainment as measured by teacher and external assessment, is confirmed by the observation of lessons and scrutiny of students' work. In general standards in French are better than those in German, which are unsatisfactory. Progress in the development of listening skills is good, depending on the amount of French or German that students hear and have to respond to. In Key Stage 4, students are able to extract complex information from texts delivered at near normal speed. Pronunciation and intonation are good at all levels, particularly in French. The ability to communicate is much weaker, and lower attaining students make little progress in Key Stage 4. Nevertheless, when students in a Year 9 class were challenged by a complex dialogue which demanded manipulation of structures, the results were good. A group of Advanced Level students were able to discuss characters in the book they were reading and take part in role-play. Reading is underdeveloped in Key Stages 3 and 4, and little activity was seen. There is some incidental reading in connection with classroom exercises, but no continuous reading, except in connection with course work in Key Stage 4. Reading demands in the Sixth Form are considerable and the progress made with set texts is slow. Writing is underdeveloped in Key Stage 3, where it consists mainly of copying, captions and grammar exercises. There are too few opportunities to write continuously. The adoption of course work assessment in Key Stage 4 had meant an increase

in writing, and some is of a high standard, as is that of Sixth Form students. One student wrote very well and at length when comparing the book and film version of 'Zanzibar'.

131. In general attitudes and behaviour are barely satisfactory, particularly in German in Key Stage 3. They were better in Key Stage 4 and very good in the Sixth Form. The explanation for this lies in the quality of classroom experience. Where good material was allied with enthusiasm, good classroom management and good relations, attitudes and behaviour were also good. Too often this did not apply

132. In one third of lessons, teaching is very good or excellent; in a further third it is satisfactory, but in the remaining third, unsatisfactory. Overall it is unsatisfactory. Teaching is much better in French than in German, where fewer than half the lessons are satisfactory, and none in Key Stage 3. In Key Stage 4 and in the Sixth Form, teaching is satisfactory overall. In the best lessons, teachers are confident in their fluency and in their ability to conduct the class in French or German, while being sensitive to the limited competence of the learner. They insist on high standards, with an expectation that they will be met. They have good class management and good relations with students. They give a clear structure to the lesson; provide a variety of activities, and conduct it with pace and enthusiasm. Poor lessons are marked by a limited and inconsistent use of French and German. There is a lack of clarity in the setting of tasks, which are often undemanding because of low expectations. Classroom organisation and management are weak and relations with the students are poor.

133. The time allocation for the first foreign language meets National Curriculum requirements, but the arrangements for the second foreign language are unsatisfactory. In a number of lessons, the pace slowed in the second half and students' concentration waned. Provisions for the least able and for students with special educational needs are unsatisfactory. Schemes of work are inadequate and fail to deal properly with the differing needs of students. Beyond the taught curriculum, the department runs two successful exchanges with France and Germany and Year 12 students take part in work experience in these countries.

134. The marking and assessment policy is embryonic, and current practice is unsatisfactory. Assessment does not reflect National Curriculum criteria and students are not aware of their progress. Assessment is not taken into account in curriculum planning, nor in setting targets. The marking of students' work is variable and depends on the individual teacher. At best it is regular, constructive and encouraging, but this is not the norm except for the Sixth Form. Too often it is perfunctory.

135. The newly appointed head of department has a clear vision of the direction which needs to be taken and is providing good leadership. She has already monitored the work of the department and this is an encouraging first step.

## MUSIC

136. Standards in Key Stage 3 have improved, with a significant minority working well beyond expectations, the majority matching them, and a further group still working towards the expected level. Skills in performance and musical literacy are very strong, and students have an extensive musical vocabulary, which they use with ease and understanding. Skills in listening and composition are more variable, and range from a standard well above expectations to one slightly below. Many students have an unusual depth of knowledge and understanding of the subject. Standards in Key Stage 4 are more variable, but still of a relatively high standard, particularly in performance skills. Results in the General Certificate of Secondary Education and in Advanced Level music continue to be above those from similar schools. Students currently working in Year 13 are extremely talented, and results are likely to be exceptional this year.

137. Since the last inspection there has been much change. A new Head of Department has been in post for four terms. The time allocated in Key Stage 3 has been increased in this academic year, and the results of this extra time are beneficial to students of all abilities. Schemes of work now fulfil the demands of the National Curriculum, and the quality of teaching and of learning in Key Stage 3 is improved. The new accommodation is bustling with activity from early until late. Numbers choosing to continue music in Key Stage 4 and post-16 work have increased dramatically, as have those students, currently two hundred, who take instrumental or vocal lessons in school. This shows a great change of attitude towards the subject amongst students. The provision of accommodation, equipment and instruments has been improved, but growing numbers make this an on-going concern. Liaison with primary schools has been established.

138. Teaching in Key Stage 3 is now satisfactory, with a third excellent. There is also some excellent teaching in Key Stage 4, but some unsatisfactory work also. Post-16 work is good, with half the lessons showing excellence. Teachers possess the required knowledge, skills and understanding. All work is carefully planned with several activities; including some making good use of new technology. The better lessons are delivered with infectious energy, enthusiasm and enjoyment. There are clear instructions and explanations, and a good pace, with deadlines set and kept for the completion of tasks, which are often broken down into easily accessible steps. Learning and understanding are regularly monitored. Despite the wide range of talent in many classes, students of all abilities are given appropriate challenge, and there is a determination that students will reach the expected high standards. In these lessons the climate for learning, while controlled, is relaxed and warm. Relationships are excellent, and praise is used well for both achievement and effort. In ineffective lessons, the delivery is less confident, sometimes with loss of control, often caused by poor communication skills. The pace is slower, with some wasted time, and there is an acceptance of lower standards, mainly because tasks are not varied to suit both talented and less able students.

139. The subject is now managed well, with continuous assessment and evaluation of students' progress, and the awareness that, in an improving situation, change is necessary to meet the varying needs of students. Visiting teachers are made to feel an important part of the department. Unfortunately, there is little time available for monitoring teaching. Generous time is now devoted to many extra-curricular activities, which are well led and well attended. Standards are high overall, and quite exceptional in senior vocal and orchestral

work, the best of which is better than in many amateur groups for adults. There are frequent opportunities for performance at all levels, and participation enhances the experience of students and the cultural life of the community.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

140. Students' attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is in line with national expectations, with a number of students exceeding them. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 by students following the core course is also in line with national expectations. The results in 1999 of students following the General Certificate of Secondary Education course were also in line with the national average. The Advanced Level results in 1999 exceeded the national average, with a third of students obtaining grades A and B compared with the national results of about a quarter. The Sixth Form students not following the Advanced Level course have the opportunity to take part in physical education of a more recreational nature.

141. At the end of Key Stage 3, all students have a sound understanding of safety aspects. Students are able to use their skills in a variety of game situations such as: football, hockey, netball and badminton. In gymnastics, students show the ability to plan a sequence of movements, link them together, perform them and evaluate them as a class activity. Planning skills are rarely used in game situations. By the end of Key Stage 4, students are able to take part in more advanced technical games and use their skills in a more efficient way. They also have the ability to transfer skills, as seen with Year 10 beginning to learn basketball and applying the ball handling skills of netball. General Certificate of Secondary Education students demonstrate a high level of performance skills, and advanced students show a very good level.

142. Teaching is good, with a third of lessons seen being satisfactory and the rest good or very good. There is no difference in teaching in the different key stages. All staff have a good knowledge of the subject and use it to maintain interest. A relaxed relationship between staff and students enhances the learning process. A strength within the department is the degree of progression of skill development within the lessons. Weaker areas are the lack of use made of the students, particularly in warm-up exercises and, except in Year 7, gymnastics. Peer evaluation is usually undertaken as a class activity.

143. A number of students have achieved success at local, county and national level, both as individuals and as team members. The attitude of the students towards physical education is very good. They change promptly for lessons and are prepared to attempt all activities and participate even in inclement weather. Progress is seen both within lessons and within the key stages, and the progress of all groups of students is similar. A wide range of extra-curricular and enhancement activities is available, and these enable students of all abilities to improve their skills. The Community Sports Leader award and the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme are both popular and successful. Provision for special educational needs students within the department is good. They are fully involved in activities and the scheme linking Year 7 dance with students at a special school provides a very positive experience for all.

144. Management of the department is good and teachers work well together. Monitoring and evaluation of teaching skills has been started but needs further development. Assessment of students takes place at the end of each module, but the criteria for Key Stage 3 assessments are neither given to the students nor put on display, and this means that students are not given specific targets within the module in order to improve their attainment. The good practice in General Certificate of Secondary Education and Advanced Level courses needs to be transferred to the core courses.

145. Since the previous inspection, good progress has been made in several areas. The department has been awarded the Sportsmark Award and The Football Association Charter Standard. Examination courses are even more popular and good standards have been maintained. Dance fulfils National Curriculum requirements, although it is still not available for boys. The overall time allocation for Key Stage 3 is satisfactory, although it is unevenly spread between the years.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

146. The religious education students receive is of excellent quality. Many enter with sound knowledge, matching levels expected by the Devonshire Agreed Syllabus. By the end of Key Stage 3, students of all abilities, including those with special educational need, reach standards expected. They have very good knowledge and understanding, particularly of Christianity and Hinduism. They understand special beliefs, for example, about God and the after life. Students appreciate rich ways in which different believers express their faith, through prayer, worship and festival. They reflect on religious questions and have insight into different beliefs. These high standards result from the active learning activities provided by the teaching, which successfully brings religious faith and experience alive.

147. Attainment in the General Certificate of Secondary Education over the past three years has been well above the national average. In 1999, results were outstandingly high, with four out of every ten achieving A\* grades. Current Year 11 students' coursework shows similarly high standards. Students have very good understanding of Christian and Hindu beliefs and teachings. They apply these in depth to questions such as marriage. Higher attaining students are skilled in evaluating different standpoints, as well as in explaining and justifying their own views. In the non-examination course, students reach levels expected by the Agreed Syllabus. They have good understanding of religious and moral questions. Students of all abilities recognise and empathise with human experience and develop further their awareness of how faith affects life. There was insufficient evidence to judge attainment in the Sixth Form.

148. At both key stages, students reach excellent standards of personal development. Students enjoy the lessons. They take interest and pride in their work. Year 7 students arrived for a lesson alight with excitement, having prepared puppets, plays and mock TV quizzes to present the beliefs and values of Sikhs. This excellently planned activity enabled

students to work creatively and all had clearly learned about trust and equality. Year 11 students listened intently as prison officers and a prisoner illustrated the realities of loss of freedom and asked perceptive questions about issues of crime and punishment. Students of all ages take initiative and responsibility for their learning and achievement. Behaviour and relationships in class are generally excellent.

149. Overall, the teaching is excellent. It exhilarates and consistently promotes excellent learning, at both key stages, by providing activities that challenge students to think and respond. All lessons are planned effectively to move students of all abilities on in their understanding, thereby enabling very good progress. Lessons contain imaginative activities, which stimulate interest. An outstanding feature is the numerous opportunities planned for students to meet people devoted to different faiths. For instance, following a rigorous study of Hindu beliefs, Year 9 students were absorbed by a presentation given by a Hare Krishna Hindu. This enabled them to share in the richness of Hindu celebration and deepened their appreciation. Students' learning is further enlivened by the excellent use made of display, particularly of photographs of their achievements. Teacher's love for their subject and their obvious commitment to the needs of all students ensure that all know that their efforts are valued. Work is marked clearly, with praise and useful guidance for further improvement. Systems to assess students' work and use results to help plan future work are very good.

150. Since the last inspection, curriculum time for Year 7 has been improved and high standards of attainment and teaching have been sustained.

151. Departmental leadership and management are very good. The result is effective teamwork, with shared commitment to high standards. There is on-going review of teaching and learning activities, but no formal monitoring. This is a self-critical department, which has established clear priorities for further development. Amongst these is the use of information technology. Some learning opportunities have been devised using the college's resources, but the department does not have its own computer facilities, and only has limited access to those of the school.

152. The subject makes an excellent contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Students gain positive attitudes of respect for different faiths and open minds to the value of religious ideas.