

INSPECTION REPORT

SOUTH MOLTON COMMUNITY COLLEGE

South Molton

LEA area: Devon

Unique reference number: 113512

Headteacher: Mr J Wade

Reporting inspector: ID Thompson
12271

Dates of inspection: 21-24 May 2001

Inspection number: 188439

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11-16
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Old Alswear Road South Molton Devon
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs M Edgar
Date of previous inspection:	13 May 1996

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18447	R Cohen	Team inspector	Religious education	
19913	R Garrett	Team inspector	English	
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27368	M Merchant	Team inspector	Geography	
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2141	J Oxley	Team inspector	Physical education	
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

South Molton Community College is a small comprehensive school for boys and girls between the ages of 11 and 16, serving a wide rural area of North Devon. There are 615 pupils at the college, very few of whom are from ethnic minority backgrounds and none are at an early stage of learning English. Pupils' standards when they join the college are broadly average. The proportion of pupils on the register of special educational needs is about average, as is the proportion with a Statement of Special Educational Needs. Although there is some rural deprivation in the area, pupils' overall social and economic circumstances are broadly average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a good school. The great majority of pupils achieve well at the college because of good quality teaching. Standards are above average in comparison with all schools and with similar schools. The college is well led and managed and provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- Leadership and management are good.
- Standards in science are well above average.
- Provision for extra-curricular activities is very good.
- Attendance is very good.
- Provision for pupils' cultural development is very good.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good.

What could be improved

- Weaknesses in the curriculum lead to some underachievement in modern foreign languages and pupils in Years 10 and 11 do not receive their full entitlement to information and communication technology and religious education.
- Boys' achievement.
- The use of assessment data to raise standards and to provide information to parents about progress.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The college has made satisfactory progress since it was last inspected in May 1996. Standards are much the same as they were. The key issues have been dealt with satisfactorily; in particular, the provision for pupils with special educational needs has been improved. Teaching has improved.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 16 year olds based on average point scores in GCSE examinations.

Performance in:	compared with				Key
	All schools			similar schools	
	1998	1999	2000	2000	
GCSE examinations	B	C	B	B	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E

Standards in the National Curriculum tests at the age of 14 in 2000 were well above average in science, above average in mathematics and average in English. Using average points scores for comparison, overall standards in 2000 were above those of schools taking pupils from similar social

and economic backgrounds. The results of GCSE examinations in 2000 were above average in comparison with all schools and with similar schools. Since the previous inspection, results have risen at a slower rate than nationally. Girls did much better than boys at age 14 and 16.

Work seen during the inspection generally confirms the standards of tests and examinations in 2000. In work seen, by the end of Year 9, standards are:

Well above average in	Science
Above average in	Geography, history, religious education, mathematics.
Average in	Art and design, design and technology, English, information and communication technology (ICT), music, physical education.
Below average in	Modern foreign languages

In work seen by the end of Year 11, standards are:

Well above average in	Art and design, science.
Above average in	Design and technology, geography, German, mathematics, physical education, religious education.
Average in	English, history, music.
Below average in	ICT, French.

In Years 7-9 achievement is:

Very good in	Science.
Good in	Art and design, design and technology, geography, history, mathematics, physical education, religious education.
Satisfactory in	English, ICT, music.
Unsatisfactory in	Modern foreign languages

In Years 10 and 11 achievement is:

Very good in	Art and design.
Good in	Design and technology, geography, German, history, music, physical education.
Satisfactory in	English, mathematics, religious education, science.
Unsatisfactory in	ICT, French.

The college has set ambitious targets, based on pupils' standards when they join the college, for an overall improvement in standards with specific targets relating to the achievement of boys. Previous targets were met but were not demanding enough to secure more than satisfactory improvement.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good overall but a substantial minority of boys in Year 8 shows unsatisfactory attitudes to learning.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. The great majority of pupils behave well. They are polite and considerate.
Personal development and relationships	Good. Pupils are confident and respond well to opportunities to take responsibility. Mutual respect is evident in the college.
Attendance	Very good.

The attitudes and behaviour of a minority of boys affects the learning of all in Year 8. Attendance is well above average and contributes to pupils' overall progress.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged 11-14 years	aged 14-16 years
Lessons seen overall	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 at least satisfactory in 96 per cent of lessons and is good or better in 73 per cent. It is very good or better in 24 per cent but unsatisfactory in four per cent. Teaching is effective in meeting the needs of all pupils and leads to pupils of all abilities acquiring skills, knowledge and understanding at a good rate. The skills of literacy are taught well and the skills of numeracy are taught to a satisfactory standard. Teaching is good in mathematics and science and most other subjects. It is satisfactory in English and modern foreign languages. Although teaching in ICT is satisfactory in Years 7-9, it is unsatisfactory overall because pupils do not receive their full entitlement in Years 10 and 11.

The strengths of teaching lie in teachers' knowledge of their subjects which supports effective teaching methods that challenge and interest pupils; their high expectations of work and behaviour and the way that they manage their classes. Such teaching leads to pupils being interested in their work and showing good levels of concentration and effort throughout the college. Assessment data is not used well enough to support planning and homework is not used consistently to extend learning.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Unsatisfactory. The way that the curriculum is organised leads to some underachievement. Some subjects do not have enough time allocated to them. Pupils do not receive their full entitlement for ICT and religious education in Years 10 and 11.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. Pupils are well integrated into the life of the college and make good progress.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good overall. Provision for spiritual development is satisfactory. It is good for moral and social development and very good for cultural development.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Satisfactory overall. Procedures to ensure pupils' welfare and personal development are good. Arrangements to monitor and support academic progress are satisfactory.
Partnership with parents and carers	The college has a satisfactory partnership with parents but does not provide them with enough information about progress.

The way that the curriculum is organised means that some subjects do not have sufficient time. Statutory requirements are not met for ICT and the requirements of the local agreed syllabus are not met for religious education in Years 10 and 11. The provision of extra-curricular activities is very good and the college benefits from its involvement in the community.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good. There is a clear focus on raising standards. The headteacher and senior staff lead by example.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Satisfactory. The governors have a good knowledge of the college and support it well but fail to meet some of their statutory responsibilities.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. The monitoring of teaching has led to a significant improvement.
The strategic use of resources	Good. The college targets its spending effectively. The principles of best value are applied appropriately.

The college has sufficient staff to meet its needs. Accommodation is satisfactory, as is the provision of resources for learning.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standards achieved • Tutors know their pupils well • The college is approachable and deals well with problems. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Behaviour • Homework • Information about progress

Inspectors agree with parents' positive views and share their concerns about homework and information about progress. However, with the exception of a minority of boys, the great majority of pupils behave well in and out of lessons.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. The great majority of pupils achieve well at the college. The pupils who took their GCSE examinations last year entered the college with average standards and left with above average standards. In relation to their earlier learning, pupils make better progress in Years 7-9 than in Years 10 and 11.
2. Standards in the National Curriculum tests at the age of 14 in 2000 were above average overall. Results in science were well above average, in mathematics they were above and in English they were average. In English, results have fluctuated but have shown a decline over the last four years while results in mathematics and science have improved. The effect of this is that pupils' average points score has improved at a slower rate than nationally. At the time of the previous inspection, girls were doing better than boys. Since then, the overall gap in performance has increased considerably although both boys' and girls' overall scores have been above average. Girls' performance has been above average in English and well above in mathematics and science while boys' performance has been below average in English and above average in mathematics and well above in science.
3. Using average points scores for comparison, overall standards in 2000 were above those of schools taking pupils from similar social and economic backgrounds. Results in English were below average but in mathematics they were above average and in science well above.
4. The standards of work seen during the inspection confirm the results of the 2000 national tests in all three subjects. In relation to pupils' standards when they joined the college, these standards represent a very good level of achievement in science, good achievement in mathematics and satisfactory achievement in English.
5. In work seen during the inspection in other subjects, standards are above average for 14 year olds in geography, history and religious education. Standards are average in all other subjects except modern foreign languages in which they are below average. Pupils achieve well in relation to their standards on entry to the college in most subjects except information and communication technology (ICT) and music, in which achievement is satisfactory. Achievement in modern foreign languages is unsatisfactory largely as a result of interruptions to learning, caused by recent staffing changes, and difficulties in both French and German caused by unsatisfactory curriculum arrangements. Overall, therefore, taking account of the strengths in many subjects and the areas of underachievement, pupils are making good progress between the ages of 11 and 14.
6. Standards are much the same as they were at the time of the previous inspection overall, but boys' standards are now much further below those of girls.
7. In GCSE examination in 2000, the proportions of pupils gaining five or more passes at grades A*-C and A*-G were above average. The proportion gaining one or more passes at grades A*-G was broadly average. Although results have improved at a slower rate than nationally, the average points score per pupil was above average and the highest since the time of the previous inspection in 1996. However, this masks a considerable difference in the results of

boys and girls. In 2000, boys' results were in line with the national figure for boys but below the national average for all pupils; girls' results were above their national average and well above the average for all pupils. The results represent an overall satisfactory level of achievement in relation to pupils' standards at the age of 14 but the college's analysis of results at grades A*-C indicates underachievement by a substantial minority of boys who might have been expected to do better. In comparison with similar schools, results in 2000 were above average.

8. Results in 2000 were well above average in science and physical education, above average in design and technology, English, mathematics and religious education. They were average in all other subjects except French, in which they were below average. Pupils' best results compared with the other subjects that they studied were in art and design and design and technology. Worst comparative results were in religious education, in which standards are affected by the organisation of the curriculum.
9. In work seen during the inspection, standards are well above average at age 16 in art and design and science. They are above average in design and technology, geography, physical education, religious education and mathematics. Standards are average in other subjects except ICT and modern foreign languages. The standards of work seen generally reflect the standards suggested by the 2000 GCSE results. However, there are some differences. Standards are improving in art and design and geography; standards in work seen in religious education are higher than examination standards partly because the time allocated to the subject impedes examination preparation and partly because a substantial proportion of more able pupils choose not to follow the examination course. Since the previous inspection, standards have improved in science and physical education and have been maintained in most other subjects.
10. Pupils' achievement in art and design is very good in relation to their standards at the start of the course. Achievement is good in design and technology, geography, history and physical education. It is satisfactory in all other subjects except ICT and modern foreign languages, in which achievement is affected by curriculum deficiencies.
11. Standards of literacy are average. Much reading is done for research in art. In science, pupils are encouraged to read carefully and high standards of writing are expected. Pupils in history are helped to achieve above average standards through spelling tests of key words, effective use of writing frames and the development of good study skills. They lack, however, sufficient opportunity to read aloud. In many subjects, such as physical education, geography and art and design, pupils are provided with good opportunities to develop their writing skills. In modern foreign languages, writing skills are weak because there is no consistency of approach to teaching the necessary skills. Good support is given to help pupils with special educational needs to develop their reading skills. The learning support assistants hear pupils read every morning. In addition, an effective paired reading scheme operates in which Year 11 pupils help younger pupils improve their reading. These programmes have resulted in good rates of progress in reading for many pupils.
12. Standards of numeracy are average. Subjects across the curriculum contribute to the development of skills. For example, in science most pupils can handle numbers confidently, manipulate formulae and measure accurately in experiments. Lower attaining pupils demonstrate good graphical skills when drawing graphs of results of experiments. Most pupils in geography are competent in using and interpreting a range of graphs, make good use of co-ordinates when using Ordnance Survey maps and are comfortable with handling numbers. In design and technology, most pupils weigh and measure confidently and accurately. In physical education pupils are able to measure times and distances to a reasonable degree of accuracy.
13. The progress of pupils with special educational needs is good overall throughout the college. In many lessons, very effective support from learning assistants and well-targeted teaching enable pupils to engage in lessons and make a good contribution. National Curriculum test results at age 14 show that they achieve better than their standards when they join the college would

indicate. A clear strength is the proportion of these pupils who achieve a number of A*-G grades at GCSE, with the majority gaining success in seven or more subjects. There is effective monitoring of pupils' progress. Each year nearly half of the pupils on the special needs register move down at least one stage of the register, which is a further indication of good progress.

14. The college has set ambitious targets, based on pupils' standards when they join the college, for an overall improvement in standards with specific targets relating to the achievement of boys. Previous targets were met but were not demanding enough to secure more than satisfactory improvement.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

15. Pupils have good attitudes to the college and to their studies. Those interviewed during the inspection said that they like the college and are happy there: it is a friendly community. Extra-curricular activities are popular, especially sport. During the inspection, many pupils carried tennis rackets: the courts were crowded at lunch times. In lessons pupils listen attentively and work productively. Their motivation is strongest when teachers have prepared lessons that stimulate and interest them. This was particularly noticeable in an English lesson for Year 9 pupils on William Shakespeare's Sonnet 18 "Shall I compare thee to a summer's day". The teacher had brought a hand-scripted copy. Its visual appeal increased pupils' interest and encouraged a serious and thoughtful response. Careful planning and preparation also featured in a child development lesson for Year 10 pupils and encouraged them to contribute from personal experience. A minority of pupils has a casual approach to learning. These pupils are mainly boys, and mainly in the current Year 8. They have limited concentration and are easily distracted.
16. Behaviour in lessons is generally good. Pupils took part in producing the code of conduct and designed the posters on display around the college. Pupils behave well as they move around the college, between lessons, at break and at lunch times. They are friendly and courteous and aware that rudeness is not tolerated. Although some instances of oppressive behaviour do occur, pupils interviewed did not consider this to be an issue. Some pupils, mainly those boys in the current Year 8 with a negative approach to work, do not behave well. They can be a nuisance and disrupt lessons. Permanent exclusions are rare, but there have been two during the current year. The level of fixed term exclusions is low for a school of this size.
17. Relationships in the college are good: they are good among pupils who work together co-operatively, as well as between pupils and members of staff. In a Year 10 art lesson, all pupils were able to make good progress because they co-operated and helped one another. Relationships between pupils and members of staff are particularly good and help learning. Pupils respond well to the college's provision for their personal development through the personal, social and moral education and guidance programmes. They show a high level of tolerance for other's feelings and attitudes in such varied lessons as art, personal and social education and religious education. Opportunities to take responsibility are welcomed and taken seriously. The College Council has its own budget allocation. Council members allocate this carefully after consulting tutor groups through their representatives. Pupils also raise money energetically for a range of charitable causes.
18. Attendance at the college is very good. The rate of attendance for the academic year 1999/2000 was well above the national average. Authorised and unauthorised absence were below the national averages. Figures for the current academic year, 2000/2001, have been adversely affected by foot and mouth disease restrictions because some pupils have been quarantined on farms and unable to come to school.
19. Pupils' attitudes to their studies have improved since the previous inspection. Attendance is also better.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR PUPILS TAUGHT?

20. The overall quality of teaching is good in all years. Teaching is at least satisfactory in 96 per cent of lessons and is good or better in 73 per cent. It is very good or better in 24 per cent but unsatisfactory in four per cent. The small amount of unsatisfactory teaching was in occasional lessons in a number of departments across the college. This is a considerable improvement since the previous inspection when 15 per cent of teaching was less than satisfactory and only nine per cent very good or better. In this inspection, at least one lesson that was very good or better was seen in every department and half of the staff taught lessons to these standards.
21. In Years 7-9, teaching is at least satisfactory in all subjects. It is good in art and design, design and technology, history, mathematics, physical education, religious education and science. Teaching is very good in geography. In Years 10 and 11, teaching is very good in art and design and geography. It is good in design and technology, history, music, physical education, religious

education and science. It is satisfactory in other subjects except ICT, in which it is unsatisfactory because provision is inadequate.

22. The overall quality of learning is good. In all years, pupils make good gains in knowledge, skills and understanding in relation to their previous standards as a result of good teaching. Most pupils show keen interest in their work, concentrate and work well at a good pace because the majority of lessons are presented in ways that interest and challenge them. Many teachers drive lessons at a fast pace, using changes in activity and stimulating resources to maintain pupils' interest. Pupils develop independence as they move up through the college, for example in designing experiments in science and in the development of projects in art. The inconsistent use of challenging and appropriate homework by teachers misses an opportunity to support and develop independent study skills further. Teachers are good at establishing how well pupils are doing in lessons, for example through skilful questioning in geography, so that they can take action to support them when in difficulty and promote learning. The results of longer-term assessments are not so well used, either to support planning or to set targets for improvement. The result is that, although there is some developing good practice, for example in design and technology, many pupils are not sufficiently clear about the standards they are working at to see what they need to do to improve.
23. The high quality lessons have a combination of strengths that lead to effective learning. Teachers have good command of their subjects which gains pupils' respect, gives them authority in classrooms and enables them to plan lessons that will broaden pupils' horizons. For example, in a very good Year 8 art and design lesson, the teacher's expertise and knowledge of the subject meant that pupils of all levels of ability could be shown ways to improve techniques and to develop their work further. In mathematics, teachers' knowledge of their subject means that they are able to explain new concepts clearly and develop pupils' skills and understanding. In a Year 10 French lesson, the teacher used her knowledge of the subject to plan a good mixture of activities that kept pupils interested and working with enjoyment. Pupils worked hard because they respected the teacher and responded well to her high expectations of their effort and behaviour. A Year 10 science class made very good progress because of innovative, enthusiastic teaching that was supported by very strong subject knowledge. Here again, the teacher's high expectations and planning of challenging tasks drew a very high level of response from pupils.
24. The planning of lessons is generally satisfactory, and often good, but the common weakness of the few unsatisfactory lessons was in the way that they were planned. Planning did not take sufficient account of pupils' individual needs to ensure that tasks provided an appropriate level of challenge; occasionally this led to difficulties of classroom management.
25. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good throughout the college. Teachers are aware of pupils' needs and many departments plan work that is designed to help them learn well. Learning support assistants provide high quality support in lessons, working very effectively with individual pupils and often more widely with the whole class. Each is attached to a particular year group, which they continue to support from Year 7 to Year 11. They have overall responsibility for named pupils with statements of special educational needs. This is a key factor in promoting learning. The assistants know their pupils very well and pupils have a member of staff with whom they can build very close trust and working relationships. They keep good records of progress, which helps in the planning of lessons. In the best lessons, teachers and classroom assistants work together to plan very well how to meet pupils' individual needs.
26. The teaching of literacy skills in subjects across the curriculum is good overall. High standards of presentation are expected in physical education. Pupils produce more extended writing than usual and standards are above average. In geography there are planned opportunities to develop extended writing. Standards for the majority are above average as a result. In religious education the use of writing guidelines, an emphasis on key vocabulary and a range of writing experience produce above average standards by the age of 14. Art provides good opportunities

for developing skills. Much reading is done for research. In history, pupils are helped to achieve above average standards through spelling tests of key words, effective use of writing guides and the development of good study skills. However, they lack sufficient opportunity to read aloud. Pupils achieve above average standards in science because of the encouragement of careful reading, independent writing and high standards of presentation. In modern foreign languages, writing skills are weak because not enough use is made of writing guidelines and there is no consistency of teaching about how to structure writing. Although speaking skills are well developed, pupils do not get appropriate written reinforcement, and use of key words is patchy. Overall, the college's strategies for teaching literacy skills have had a good effect in raising standards of attainment.

27. The teaching of the key skills of numeracy across the college is satisfactory. Attention is being given in most subjects to the development of pupils' numeracy skills although at present there is no written policy for the contribution that subjects other than mathematics should be making to the improvement of pupils' numeracy skills.

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

28. Overall, the quality and range of learning opportunities offered throughout the college are unsatisfactory. This is because in Years 10 and 11 statutory requirements are not met in respect of ICT and insufficient time is provided to meet the requirements of the local agreed syllabus for religious education.
29. In Years 7-9, pupils study the subjects of the National Curriculum, religious education and personal, social and health education (PSHE). Pupils are placed into half-year groups that are then taught, in most subjects, in groups based on their abilities. The time allocation to subjects is unsatisfactory. The carousel arrangement for design and technology and art and design means that neither subject has enough time to cover National Curriculum requirements. Standards in English are affected by the low amount of time provided for teaching. Standards in French are lower than they should be for higher attainers because not enough time is spent on it in Year 9. The current arrangement which allows higher attaining pupils to choose whether or not they study German in Year 9 is also unsatisfactory because it means that part of the class has to combine with another group while the rest are having their weekly German lesson.
30. In Years 10 and 11, pupils have a range of options, in addition to compulsory subjects. This includes a GNVQ Engineering course that is both popular and successful. Although a computer literacy and information technology (CLAIT) course is offered as an after-school option, pupils cannot study ICT in school time.
31. The college week allows for 24 hours 10 minutes teaching time. This is below the recommended time for secondary schools and needs to be reconsidered when the curriculum is reviewed in the light of the weaknesses outlined above.
32. The college's policy on inclusion is to allow all pupils access to the whole curriculum. A particular strength is that all pupils, regardless of their ability, successfully follow a GCSE double combined science course in Years 10 and 11. Pupils with special educational needs are fully integrated in mainstream classes. Many classes, in which there are higher numbers of pupils on the special educational needs register, have a learning support assistant who supports these pupils in addition to their normal class teacher. This predominates in Years 7-9 but some provision is made for pupils with Statements of Special Educational Need in Years 10 and 11. This is a positive feature of the college and the policy and practice are working very well. Pupils with special educational needs have full access to the National Curriculum and a recent success story has been the introduction of the opportunity for a small

number of pupils to attend North Devon College for one day per week to study a variety of vocational courses. This has helped raise the self-esteem of pupils and given them added motivation to do well. This is an improvement that was recommended at the previous inspection. A further improvement in the curriculum provision for pupils with special educational needs has been a new programme in Years 7-9, which aims to support pupils with learning or behavioural difficulties. This has involved small numbers of pupils at a time who work with the community Youth Worker and his assistant. Together they work on team building, valuing other people's feelings, problem solving tasks and helping to raise self-esteem. So far this has involved around 40 pupils. This has helped to motivate pupils.

33. Since the previous inspection, many departments have improved their curriculum provision for pupils with special educational needs. Policies are much clearer and planning has also improved. Staff have a much better awareness of the learning needs of pupils and the improved individual education plans help all staff to match their work to the needs of these pupils. Work is well matched to pupils' needs with particularly good examples evident in English, mathematics, science, design and technology and history. There is scope to further develop this in other departments. There are no pupils with English as an additional language. Gifted and talented pupils have been identified and good detailed provision is made for them outside the normal curriculum, with a range of interesting activities. Teachers are aware that the needs of these pupils should be met more effectively, but planning for this is still at an early stage in most departments.
34. The strategies for teaching the basic skills of literacy are good and for numeracy are satisfactory. Most departments make planned provision to improve standards of literacy and, where appropriate, numeracy. Teaching of basic skills builds well upon the curricular links established between the English and mathematics departments and partner primary schools.
35. A very broad range of opportunities for extra-curricular activities is available that enrich the curriculum and extend opportunities for learning. There are many sporting activities attended by about forty per cent of pupils and supervised by twelve staff. The college is particularly successful in promoting the performing arts and sport. Music, art and design and drama involve many pupils in a wide range of activities. There are educational visits to theatres, art galleries and places of interest as well as some foreign visits, including a visit to Spain organised by the art and design department. The geography department runs interesting fieldwork visits that enhance the curriculum.
36. The college's provision for pupils' personal and social education, including drugs and sex education, is good. There are two carefully planned programmes. Tutors teach a weekly period of personal, social and moral education in Years 7-9. Specialist teachers take over the guidance programme in Years 10 and 11. Both programmes make extensive and effective use of speakers and specialists from outside the college to increase pupils' knowledge in such areas as social skills and citizenship.
37. The college has very successfully developed extensive links with the community it serves. These links run throughout all year groups and most areas of the curriculum. They include sporting contacts, links with local businesses, public services and organisations, writers, artists and many others. Pupils benefit enormously from the opportunities offered to broaden their horizons and awareness of the world beyond school.
38. There are good links with the partner primary schools, both large and small, at both curricular and pastoral levels. The academic council meets regularly. Members of staff share training and resources where appropriate. Teachers of English and mathematics have observed the teaching of literacy and numeracy in primary schools. Former pupils' results are always passed on. Links with post-16 and further education colleges are equally effective. Because of its relatively isolated rural situation, the college recognises the need for pupils to learn about the range of

opportunities available to them within a reasonable area and arranges visits to and from these institutions.

39. Provision for careers education is good. This takes place in PSHE lessons in Years 7-9 and in guidance lessons in Years 10 and 11. All pupils have access to the careers library and some very useful CD-ROM careers software. All Year 10 pupils have a work experience placement that is very well planned and followed up. Care is taken to minimise any disruption of the pupils' studies or the college organisation. Back in college, pupils' work experience diaries provide useful information for their key skills records. Although there are only two vocational courses in Years 10 and 11, GCSE business studies and GNVQ engineering, there is good provision for them. In the longer term, other vocational options are planned to further enrich the curriculum.
40. Overall the provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. However, there is as yet little monitoring of these aspects of pupils' development to ensure that they are systematically and consistently threaded through all subjects of the curriculum and that these important dimensions, particularly the spiritual, are made explicit in all departmental planning and practice.
41. The opportunities for pupils' spiritual development are satisfactory. The college does not provide an act of worship each day for every pupil and therefore does not fulfil statutory requirements in this respect. However, assemblies are held regularly and these provide a positive medium for the consideration of moral and social issues; many also include a time of reflection or prayer. Opportunities to develop spiritual awareness within subjects of the curriculum arise spontaneously, or as the result of individual initiative; there are missed opportunities in several subjects. There is a need for all departments to review their contribution to pupils' spiritual development in their curricular planning and for senior management to monitor this area more systematically. In religious education, pupils have good opportunities to consider their own beliefs and study a range of world religions. Pupils have opportunities to empathise, for example, in history where they study the Holocaust and its impact.
42. Provision for pupils' moral development is good. Teachers and other adults in the college continually reinforce basic moral principles throughout the daily life of the college. Adults provide good role models for pupils. They treat pupils with respect and kindness, discuss issues of right and wrong and try to explain why one course of action is more acceptable than another. There is a good selection of books in the library on a range of moral and ethical issues. In religious education, pupils come to an understanding of moral codes in several different world faiths; in history pupils visit the Holocaust exhibition in the Imperial War Museum. In geography, pupils are encouraged to adopt a view on the rights and wrongs of multinational companies and agriculture in less developed countries. In design and technology, pupils consider the moral implications of the use of finite resources. Pupils are encouraged to maintain fair play when involved in sporting activities.
43. The provision for pupils' social development is good. There are good opportunities within lessons when pupils work together in pairs and in small groups; these involve a range of activities and pupils work well together. There is a very good range of extra-curricular activities and these enable pupils to work together both informally and formally. The college provides opportunities for pupils to exercise responsibilities, for example, through the system of house captains and the college council.
44. The provision for cultural development is very good. Very rich provision is made in art and design, for example, where pupils have access to a wide range of cultural opportunities, including visiting artists, book illustrators and graphic designers. There are regular trips to St Ives to visit art galleries and an annual visit to London to the National Gallery, Royal Academy and National Portrait Gallery. Opportunities within art and design to study the wider aspects of life in a multicultural society are also strong. This is evident, for example, in the work of pupils in Year 10 and 11 who are not required by the syllabus to study the art of ethnic minority cultures and yet continue to do so because they are interested. The art and design department also actively encourages its pupils to enter competitions, including, for example, designing a book

token, a fabric-hanging project for a museum in Exeter, and designing and painting wooden spoons for a local restaurant. Volunteer artists are currently being recruited to take part in a sponsored mural to be painted in the science corridor. Consideration of different cultures is also emphasised in the library, not only through its book stock but also in the display of relevant artefacts to support the curriculum. During the week of the inspection, for example, there were displays of Native American art, an Arab tea set and a model of the Aztec god of fire. The college recently held a competition to design a logo to display the code of conduct – the winning entrant based her work on African art and this is displayed near the college foyer. In the geography department, pupils gain insight into the values and beliefs of people in a variety of different cultures, looking, for example, at the impact of different cultures on birth rates. In music, pupils are introduced to a variety of musical cultures. A cross-curricular trip to Amsterdam is being planned for next year. In history, pupils are taught to examine stereotypes in western perceptions of Native American Indians.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

45. Procedures for pupils' welfare are generally good. The Year 7 team settles new pupils into the college before handing over to a different head of year and tutors at the start of Year 8. This team then stays with pupils for the rest of their time in the college. They come to know them well and use their knowledge to provide good personal support. At present, members of staff receive an informal briefing on child protection procedures from the designated teacher, the pastoral deputy head. There is no formal declaration by the governors stating that county procedures have been adopted, or written guidance incorporated in the staff handbook. There are good procedures to ensure pupils' health and safety, both within the college and on visits outside. Procedures to record and monitor attendance are satisfactory overall. Most attendance is recorded manually, but a computerised system is being tried in one year group. The education welfare officer visits the college regularly to monitor registers and provides good support.
46. The college's procedures to promote discipline and good behaviour are good. Regular reviews of year groups enable successes, concerns and useful strategies to be shared and implemented consistently by members of staff. Credits and tokens reward good work and effort. Certificates are given for good conduct and high attendance. Achievement of all kinds is acknowledged in an annual awards evening.
47. The academic progress of individual pupils in Years 7 and 8 is efficiently recorded, tracked and co-ordinated. Such tracking is currently less extensively developed further up the college, although the procedures in use in the earlier years will be extended as pupils move up the college. Although the quality of academic support given to individual pupils is currently not consistent throughout the college, it is satisfactory overall. The procedures for recording and monitoring individual pupils' personal development are good. Tutors and heads of year know pupils well and keep careful records. Pupils receive good guidance when they choose their GCSE options and when deciding what to do when they have taken them. Some pupils in Year 11 have the support of mentors. Initiatives such as the inclusion course, 'retracking' programme and the placements at North Devon College help particular groups of pupils. The personal support and guidance that pupils receive is uniformly good. Despite this, the inconsistencies in the monitoring of individual pupils' academic progress mean that the quality of the educational and personal support and guidance provided by the college is only satisfactory overall.
48. The college's procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' academic progress are satisfactory. The college is developing systems to ensure that pupils' attainment is assessed against national standards and that progress is monitored throughout the curriculum. These systems have only been used in Year 8 and have not yet had sufficient impact in departments. As a result, the monitoring of progress varies greatly between subjects. Not enough use is yet made of available data to inform teachers' planning or to modify the curriculum.
49. The procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are satisfactory. National Curriculum test results and nationally standardised tests are used to build up a clear picture of pupils' attainment when they arrive at the college. They are used well to place pupils into groups and to identify pupils with special educational needs. Arrangements for assessing pupils' attainment are satisfactory in most subjects. They are good in mathematics and geography. At the end of Year 9, National Curriculum test results are used to set targets for pupils and subjects. However, the process of setting of targets is not well developed in most subjects.
50. The use of assessment information to guide curricular planning is unsatisfactory overall. The data which is provided is not being used effectively in many subjects when planning teaching or reviewing the curriculum. For example, in geography, little attempt is made to use assessment information to raise standards or, in art and design and English, to guide planning. In many subjects the assessment information is not shared well enough with pupils or parents. For instance, in design and technology targets are set but these are not shared with pupils. Assessment is used well to track the progress of pupils with special educational needs and to ensure that teachers are informed about their needs.
51. The overall procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' progress are satisfactory. The college has begun to provide a good range of data that will allow subjects to monitor the progress of pupils. However, it is not yet being used well enough in many subjects to track

pupils' progress as they move through the college. Tracking of progress is good in science and design and technology. In modern foreign languages and religious education insufficient use is made of the levels at which pupils are working.

52. There has been some progress since the previous inspection. A health and safety officer has been appointed and issues dealt with. However, formal procedures for recording and monitoring the progress of individual pupils are still not fully developed and procedures for child protection have not been formalised.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

53. Most parents have a broadly satisfactory view of the college: they are pleased with the college and what it provides for their children. A minority expressed concern about certain aspects of the college. Most of the parents who returned the questionnaire or attended the parents' meeting believe that their children like the college, they consider that their children make good progress there and that it is easy to approach the college if they have problems or concerns. The inspection team agrees with the positive views of these parents. Some parents have concerns. They do not think that the homework set is appropriate, that they are well enough informed about the progress their children make, that standards of behaviour are good or that the college works closely with them. The inspection team considers that the college does work well with parents and has effective links with them. However, the team does agree with parents that the information provided about progress is not satisfactory, that the amount of homework set is insufficient and that a minority of pupils do not behave well.
54. The college has worked hard to establish effective links with parents and is keen to take note of their views, for example through a survey to seek parents' impressions of the college. Parents are contacted quickly when concerns over attendance or behaviour occur. Parents are notified when their children have done well, and to help celebrate success of all kinds at the annual achievement evening. The college holds information evenings for parents, for example on drug education. Members of staff are readily available for consultation. The principal held an open forum for discussion after the governors' annual general meeting for parents.
55. The college provides satisfactory information about itself through newsletters, the prospectus and the governors' annual report. However, the information which parents receive about their children's progress is not satisfactory overall, although better for pupils in Years 10 and 11 than lower down the college. Annual reports do not consistently give sufficient information about progress neither made nor tell parents exactly what their children can do by giving National Curriculum levels or targets for the subject. Suggested areas for improvement tend to be general, rather than how to improve in the subject.
56. The impact of parents' involvement and the contribution they make to their children's learning is satisfactory. The use which parents make of planners varies. Attendance at consultation evenings is satisfactory. The Friends of the College provide active support through fund-raising, social events and the annual fete. Parents help by supporting trips and events, especially sporting fixtures.
57. Parents of pupils with Statements of Special Educational Needs are fully involved in annual reviews of progress and during the process they are given access to good information to help support the process. There has been a parental survey seeking views on the college's provision for special educational needs. This was overwhelmingly positive and reflects the good work that goes on. The department has used this to help shape provision and amend its work in

several areas. This could be usefully extended and repeated with parents receiving a digest of the findings.

58. Pupils with special educational needs make a strong start at the college. This is because they are visited in their primary schools, have opportunities to come to the college in small groups and get used to their new surroundings, their parents are well briefed on what to expect and how to help and pupils' learning needs are very carefully identified. This allows staff to undertake advanced planning and tune into the needs of the pupils.
59. There has been little change in the quality of the college's partnership with parents since the previous inspection.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

60. The college is well led and managed by the principal and senior staff. There is a positive spirit in the college and good morale. Since his appointment in September 2000, the principal has provided effective direction that has secured a strong commitment to improvement among all staff, including administrative and ancillary staff. The draft improvement plan shows that he has carried out a rapid and detailed assessment of the college and has a clear view of what needs to be done. In a relatively short time, he has established a culture of self-review in which performance is being analysed at all levels to identify what needs improving, and how to do it. All members of the senior management team lead by example, particularly in the classroom. The atmosphere in the college, during lessons and at break times, reflects shared views about learning, behaviour and relationships. The principal and senior staff are approachable and accessible. Communication is good so that staff understand the role they are expected to play in the development and running of the college. Routine administration is efficient so that the college runs smoothly from day to day.
61. At the heart of the college's drive to improve is a clearly defined strategic management process that is linked to systematic staff development. Monitoring, evaluation and development of teaching are good, as is the strategy for appraisal and performance management. Targets are set for all teachers and their progress towards these targets is monitored and evaluated. Systematic review of professional development requirements takes place, closely linked to the college's development planning and performance management arrangements. The connection between development and performance management is well understood by staff. A concerted effort has been made to monitor and improve teaching. The overall quality of teaching, the high proportion of teachers who taught lessons to a very high standard during this inspection and the improvement since the previous inspection, indicate successful co-operation between teachers and managers at all levels to raise standards. A striking feature of the inspection was the way in which staff sought actively to work with inspectors to find ways to improve. During the inspection, many staff responded positively to the most minor criticisms made about their teaching and had improved their practice by the end of the week.
62. An additional important strand of the monitoring and evaluation of the college's performance is the system of in-depth departmental reviews that are spread over half of one term. These are supplementary to the college's annual review of performance and have a specific focus, such as leadership and management or standards of teaching and learning. As part of middle management development, heads of department are part of the reviewing team. The process is intended to be cyclic and to ensure that senior staff have first hand knowledge of standards. Governors are also kept informed through summative reports. Targets are set for departments based on the results of these reviews and whole-school issues are identified for development. Responsibilities are delegated to staff in posts of responsibility, who respond well to their tasks. The pastoral system and the majority of departments are managed well and there is a clear link between the quality of management and standards and achievement in a subject. For example, there is very good management in physical education and science where standards are high and

improving. The lack of a co-ordinator for ICT has led to unsatisfactory standards and improvement. In modern foreign languages, development has been inhibited in part by staffing changes and unsatisfactory curriculum arrangements. Nevertheless, important issues from the previous inspection, such as weaknesses in pupils' writing, have not been dealt with effectively by management with the result that standards have not improved enough. The management of special educational needs is good. The special needs co-ordinator shows strong commitment to his work and since the last inspection has brought about much change, which has recently accelerated. He has ensured that all aspects of the special educational needs Code of Practice are adhered to and the administration of the department is very good. Procedures for the inclusion of pupils on the register of special educational needs are clear. All staff are much more aware of the implications of the Code of Practice. Individual education and behaviour plans are now much sharper and as a result give better short-term targets for learning and it is easier to track progress. There are good links with outside agencies. Some very good training has been provided for the learning support assistants.

63. Financial planning in the college is good. The college receives a broadly average amount of income. Spending is at present constrained by the need to defray a budget deficit carried forward from previous years but there are clear plans to deal with this; spending is carefully managed and targeted to improvements on a three-year cycle. For example, a new computer room has recently been constructed and the appearance of rooms and corridors is steadily being improved to provide a more pleasant learning environment. The bursar keeps a tight rein on finance and routine administration of the budget is efficient. The college applies the principles of best value appropriately. Standards are compared with the highest performing schools in the authority and results of spending are evaluated by assessing the benefits to the college. The college puts in considerable funds to help support provision for special educational needs and the money is well spent. Specific funds received for Statements of Special Educational Needs and grants to support pupil retention have been effectively used and have led to improvements in pupils' progress and support. Overall, the college makes good use of its resources and is providing good value for money.
64. One of the few weaknesses in management is the failure of the governing body to meet its statutory obligations. Pupils are not receiving their entitlement to be taught the full National Curriculum in ICT. The requirements of the local agreed syllabus for religious education are not fully met and the frequency of acts of collective worship does not meet requirements. However, governors have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the college. Each member of the governors' curriculum committee is attached to a college department and, additionally, two members of the governing body visit the college each month to inspect matters of personal interest or delegated responsibility. This provides governors with considerable first hand information, strengthens links between the staff and the governing body and gives a good insight into the daily working of the college. Governors make a good contribution to shaping the direction of the college and keep a watchful eye on its progress. Ambitious targets have been set for performance, which will represent significant improvement if achieved. The principal is confident that they will be and the inspection team believe that the college has a good capacity to succeed.
65. The match of teaching and support staff to the demands of the curriculum is satisfactory overall. However, there are shortages of specialist staff in English, religious education and physical education, and there is no co-ordinator for ICT at present. These deficiencies are affecting standards and restrict the capacity for improvement in these departments. There is a good induction programme for new staff. They are introduced to the college before starting work and can join the formal programme provided for newly qualified teachers. The latter are well supported by these formal arrangements, which include twice-termly assessments, and by their departments.
66. The college's accommodation is satisfactory overall. Building developments include an ICT suite and special educational needs accommodation. Future work is planned as the budget allows. Science laboratories have been upgraded and the quality of learning has improved. The mathematics areas have some very large classrooms, which provides flexibility for teaching. Physical education has good facilities for many activities. The full range of teaching strategies

cannot be used in the temporary hatted classrooms and they are becoming a problem in adverse weather conditions. Music accommodation is inadequate for large classes.

67. The college's resources for learning are satisfactory overall, although they are inadequate to meet the needs of pupils in ICT. The college recognises this and has embarked on a major refurbishment with the result that the ratio of computers to pupils is now close to the national average. The college spends a higher proportion of its budget on pupils' learning than do most other schools, with the result that some subjects, such as mathematics, English and science, have a good level of resources. There are, however, deficiencies in art and design, geography, religious education and history. A shortage of gymnastic apparatus restricts opportunities in physical education.
68. The library continues to be a well-utilised and extremely well valued resource for learning. The clearly labelled shelves, the very good range of books and provision of networked computers makes it a good learning environment. Library staff do well to encourage use of the library by pupils and staff and there have been numerous successful "authors' days" where pupils' love of reading has been enhanced through the visits to the college of notable national authors.
69. The management of the college has improved significantly since the previous inspection. The issues from the report have been dealt with effectively. In particular, teaching and learning have improved, as has the provision for pupils with special educational needs.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

70. In order to raise standards further, the college should:

(1) Review the structure of the curriculum and the length of the college day to: meet statutory requirements in respect of the provision for information and communication technology and the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus for religious education; improve the allocation and distribution of time to subjects.

(Paragraph Numbers 5, 8, 9, 10, 28, 29, 30, 64, 99, 112, 128, 129, 132, 140, 160, 163)

(2) Improve boys' achievement*.

(Paragraph Numbers 2, 6, 7, 72, 82, 104)

(3) Improve the use of assessment data to support planning and provide better information for parents about progress*.

(Paragraph Numbers 22, 48, 50, 85, 95, 110, 156)

- These items is already included in the School Improvement Plan.

The following should also be considered for inclusion in the action plan:

- The attitudes and behaviour of a substantial minority of boys in Year 8.
(Paragraph Numbers 15, 16, 53, 94, 101, 108, 125, 161)
- The use of homework to extend and consolidate learning.
(Paragraph Numbers 22, 53)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	104
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
4	20	49	23	4	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	615	N/A
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	63	

Special educational needs

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	15	N/A
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	131	N/A

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	21
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	29

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.4
National comparative data	7.9

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.5
National comparative data	1.1

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	59	54	113

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	31	41	48
	Girls	42	40	35
	Total	73	81	83
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	65(69)	73(71)	74(68)
	National	63 (63)	65(62)	59(55)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	21(28)	49(49)	42(29)
	National	28 (28)	42 (38)	30 (23)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	35	42	44
	Girls	43	37	37
	Total	78	79	81
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	69(80)	71(70)	80(85)
	National	64(64)	66(64)	62(60)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	27(39)	44(50)	32(41)
	National	31 (31)	39(37)	29(28)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	60	70	130

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	25	58	59
	Girls	47	66	68
	Total	72	124	127
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	56(52)	95(97)	98(100)
	National	47.4(46.6)	90.6(90.9)	95.6(95.8)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	41(39)
	National	38.4(38)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	1
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	1
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	613
Any other minority ethnic group	0

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	8	0
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– Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	34.7
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17.7

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7– Y11

Total number of education support staff	18
Total aggregate hours worked per week	437

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	76.5
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	25.4
Key Stage 4	20.2

Financial information

1999/2000

Financial year	
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	£
Total income	1427124
Total expenditure	1455714
Expenditure per pupil	2341
Balance brought forward from previous year	34850
Balance carried forward to next year	6260

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	615
Number of questionnaires returned	159

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	30	60	9	1	0
My child is making good progress in school.	36	55	6	1	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	25	57	11	2	6
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	19	58	16	3	3
The teaching is good.	27	61	7	1	4
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	24	54	14	6	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	48	44	5	1	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	48	47	3	1	2
The school works closely with parents.	24	47	23	3	3
The school is well led and managed.	25	59	5	0	10
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	31	54	13	1	1
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	23	53	12	3	9

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

ENGLISH

71. Standards in English are average at ages 14 and 16. These standards represent satisfactory achievement. They represent good achievement by pupils with special educational needs. Although the quality of teaching is satisfactory, with several good features, there are some weaknesses and other limiting factors that are obstacles to raising standards.
72. Using average points for comparison, scores in the 2000 National Curriculum tests at age 14 were close to the national average for all schools, but below those for similar schools. Pupils' results were below those in mathematics and well below science. The rate of improvement in average points scores has been slower than the national trend since 1998, after fluctuating widely in 1996 and 1997. Boys have consistently performed less well than girls, and boys' performance has usually been below the average for boys nationally. Teachers' assessments of pupils' performance in 2000 were slight overestimates, and matched work seen during the inspection.
73. In 2000, results for A*-C and A*-G grades in GCSE examinations in English were above the national average for all pupils. Girls' results for A*-C grades were significantly above girls' results nationally, and much higher than boys' results. Boys' results, although below average for A*-C grades, were above average for A*-G grades, and their average points score matched the national score. All pupils achieved as well as might be expected given their average points scores in National Curriculum tests at age 14 in 1998. Comparison of results with those of similar schools shows above average performance. Pupils, and particularly boys, performed relatively better in GCSE English than in mathematics, science and several other subjects. Results for A*-C grades in GCSE English Literature were in line with the national average. All pupils who were entered for this examination gained a grade in the range A*-G, an above average result. Girls' results for A*-C grades were again significantly higher than girls' results nationally. However, English literature candidates, particularly boys, performed relatively less well in this subject than they did in English and several other subjects.
74. In work seen during the inspection, standards at age 14 are average. This is what might be expected given pupils' standards on joining the college and represents satisfactory achievement by most pupils. Writing standards are average overall. Higher attaining pupils in Years 7 to 9 write accurately in a variety of styles. Their study skills are well-developed, including being able to annotate text appropriately to point up differences in language use and emphasise key points, for example when comparing two versions of a Shakespeare sonnet. Middle attainers can tackle a range of written work and have reasonable control over paragraphing and sentence structure, but writing is less well presented, contains more inaccuracies and can be over-conversational in style. Lower attainers, particularly boys, often have obvious difficulties with handwriting. In a Year 8 lesson, writing a description of a street in the novel 'Buddy' was a slow business for some and affected productivity. Weaknesses in spelling, punctuation and structuring of work are apparent even in word-processed pieces. Reading standards are broadly average. Higher attainers read fluently, accurately and with expression. In a Year 7 lesson, when reading aloud from 'quote cards' on 'The Tempest', pupils coped well with Shakespeare's language. Middle attainers are competent readers but lack expression and can stumble over individual words or phrases or make faulty assumptions about what is coming next. Such errors occurred, for example, when pupils were reading aloud from the play 'Flour Babies' in a Year 9 class. Lower attainers and those with special educational needs manage reading in a range from steady to word-by-word. The progress of pupils with special educational needs is good, however, thanks to good support from teachers and classroom assistants. This was so in a Year 9 class, for example, when a hearing impaired pupil and others with special educational needs coped well with reading a simplified version of an extract from 'Frankenstein'. Standards of speaking are average. Pupils' listening skills are well developed and as a result they enhance their knowledge and understanding of English.

75. In work seen during the inspection, standards at the age of 16 are average. This represents satisfactory achievement given pupils' test performance in 1999. Higher attainers display above average standards of reading, speaking and listening as shown, for example, in paired presentations of the 'meeting' scene in Shakespeare's 'Romeo and Juliet'. Year 11 pupils have a thorough knowledge of texts, and produce careful analyses of key themes, characters and relationships. Some are capable of quite powerful personal writing in 'realistic' rather than 'imaginative' style. Their work would benefit from better organisation of material and less exemplification so that writing is focused rather than lengthy. Middle attainers can annotate text and record notes effectively. They write knowledgeably and thoroughly about set texts. Their writing is prone to technical errors and can become conversational and over-narrated, especially when using dialogue. Some also lack accuracy when reading aloud, as in a Year 10 lesson on J M Synge's text 'In the Shadow of the Glen' when 'health' was read for 'heath', 'particular' for 'peculiar', 'a man' instead of 'the man', and the sense of a long sentence was not conveyed. Lower attaining pupils, including those with special educational needs, can structure work appropriately given a framework to work within, but their independent writing lacks a cursive style, is brief, and suffers from spelling and punctuation errors. Attentive listening by most pupils is a strong feature in this age group also. The strengths and weaknesses of standards and the picture of recent results in GCSE English are broadly similar to those indicated in the previous inspection. English literature results have improved, however.
76. The contribution of other subjects to standards of literacy is good. In physical education, for example, high standards of presentation are expected of GCSE pupils and achieved. All pupils produce more extended writing than is usually the case and standards are above average. Pupils care about their work and talk about it with interest and confidence. In geography there are planned opportunities (often linked with ICT) to develop extended writing, helped by a variety of teaching approaches including role-play, simulations and diary writing. Pupils speak confidently about their work and listen well. Standards for the majority are above average as a result. In religious education the use of writing guides, an emphasis on key vocabulary and a range of writing experience produce above average standards by the age of 14. Although standards of writing in art and design are average, the subject provides good opportunities for developing skills. Much reading is done for research. Pupils use key words interestingly, for example in lettering projects. They are also tested on spelling. Pupils in history are helped to achieve above average standards through spelling tests of key words, effective use of writing guides and the development of good study skills. However, they are not given enough opportunity to read aloud. In music, pupils produce written work of at least average standard. They are articulate and confident speakers. Reading opportunities include the study of 'Beowulf' in Year 7 as a stimulus for composition. Pupils would benefit from reinforcement of key vocabulary, as some, even in Year 11, remain uncertain about definitions. Pupils achieve above average standards in science because of the encouragement of careful reading, independent writing and high standards of presentation. A clear statement in the department handbook is linked with appropriate resources for teaching literacy skills. In design and technology these skills are also well developed and standards are above average. Teachers plan their use of 'word walls' and selected writing guides. They encourage research and reporting back to the class. Literacy skills are under-developed in ICT. Few opportunities occur for pupils to practise skills because of poor co-ordination and lack of departmental 'push'. Standards are below average as a result. In modern foreign languages, writing skills are weak because not enough use is made of writing guides or models, and there is no consistency of approach about how to structure writing. Although speaking skills are well developed, pupils do not get appropriate written reinforcement, and use of key words is patchy. Apart from these few weaknesses, however, the college's strategies for teaching literacy skills have had a good effect in raising standards.
77. Pupils' attitudes to learning and standards of behaviour are good. Only on one occasion were some pupils reluctant to settle to work and easily distracted from work by their peers. They were part of a group whose learning had been disrupted by staffing problems and whose present teacher was still experiencing management and relationship problems. Occasionally not all pupils were involved in class discussion or a teacher's questioning. Usually, however, pupils work with interest and concentration, particularly when they are actively involved in the learning process. This was the case, for example, when pupils in a Year 7 class wrote quietly and carefully about characters in 'The Tempest' as a result of the teacher's good use of resources and smooth classroom management. A Year 9 class responded seriously and thoughtfully to their teacher's questions about Shakespeare's Sonnet 18 and sonnet form. They were

particularly interested in a 1609 version of the poem, not only because of language differences but also because of its beautiful appearance in a hand-scripted publication found by their teacher. Pupils in Year 10 responded well when challenged to present scenes from 'Romeo and Juliet'. Two boys were confident enough to make light-hearted fun of the dialogue, but others also took seriously the feelings involved and were mature enough to work in mixed gender pairs in scenes requiring 'declarations of love'.

78. Teaching is satisfactory overall, with several good features. Learning reflects the quality of teaching and is similarly satisfactory overall. On the one occasion when teaching was unsatisfactory, it was because the teacher had difficulty getting the full attention of all Year 9 pupils or did not insist on things happening the way she wanted or missed an opportunity to pick up key issues as reading progressed. As a result, learning time was lost and productive activity was limited to a short period of reading. The teacher was, however, a non-specialist working with a group whose learning had already been disrupted due to staffing difficulties. Usually teachers manage their pupils well and share good relationships. They use a good range of teaching strategies. Their feedback to pupils in lessons is constructive and helpful. They support pupils with special educational needs well. A good example occurred in a Year 8 lesson when the teacher's questioning drew on what pupils knew about the novel 'Buddy' and she reinforced and extended their understanding through her repetition and elaboration of their answers. She provided guidance on writing for pupils with special educational needs and they acknowledged its usefulness in learning how to give structure to their writing. In a Year 9 lesson, the teacher drew out pupils' knowledge of sonnet form. She extended analysis by encouraging thinking about why changes in language occurred, thus adding to learning about language. She kept questions and interpretation open-ended, and pupils learned that their own opinions were valued. Another teacher set a good pace for her Year 10 pupils by setting a time limit for presentations of a scene from 'Romeo and Juliet'. She drew key points such as 'emphasis', 'movement' and 'proximity' from the pupils themselves and gave good feedback so that they gained understanding of the feelings involved and how to express them. Some teaching, while satisfactory, lacks these strong features and, as a result, lessons are less involving and productive. Greater consistency in the quality of teaching would help raise standards overall.
79. There has been satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection in May 1996. The head of department provides satisfactory leadership and has worked hard to improve performance, particularly of boys, by extending the department's range of teaching strategies, developing reading and setting targets. She is making praiseworthy efforts to introduce the new framework for teaching English. However, improvement has not been better than satisfactory because the quality of teaching is inconsistent, reflecting the limited monitoring which takes place and the shortage of specialist teachers in the department. Furthermore, the lack of curriculum time in Year 7 constrains what can be taught and therefore how much and how quickly pupils can learn in this important year. Classes from Year 8 onwards have a wide range of ability, which makes it difficult for teachers to focus work effectively. Teaching rooms, although adequate for the purpose, are not grouped together and some are used for other subjects. These limitations restrict the capacity for further improvement.

MATHEMATICS

80. Standards of work seen during the inspection are above average. Pupils' achievement as they move through the college is good in relation to standards at the start of Year 7. The quality of pupils' learning is good because of pupils' attitudes, the quality of the teaching and activities matched to pupils' needs. Pupils make good progress as they move through the college.
81. In National Curriculum tests at the age of 14 in 2000, standards were above average when compared with all schools and similar schools. These results represent good achievement in relation to pupils' standards when they joined the college. There was no significant difference between boys' results and those of girls. Results improved at a faster rate than nationally from 1996 to 1998 but fell back in 1999 and 2000. Results were better than those in English although not as good as in science.
82. In the 2000 GCSE examinations, the proportion of pupils gaining grades A* to C was above average. These results represent satisfactory achievement in relation to standards at the end of Year 9. Girls' results were significantly better than those of boys. The proportion gaining grades A*-G was above average. Pupils did not perform as well in mathematics as they did in some

other subjects they studied. Results have been maintained at above average levels over the last three years. In the GCSE statistics examinations in 2000, the proportion of pupils gaining A* to C grades was in line with the national average.

83. In work seen during the inspection, standards match the 2000 test results. Standards are above average at the age of 14. Most pupils have appropriate number skills. Algebraic skills are not yet well developed for many pupils; average attaining pupils can draw straight line graphs for equations although many still have difficulty with substituting numbers into equations. Most pupils have a satisfactory understanding of shape and space; average attaining pupils in Year 8 have a good understanding of how to find areas of rectangles, triangles and trapeziums. Problem solving skills are being developed well; by the end of Year 9 most pupils are able to identify patterns and establish rules in investigations. Standards of numeracy are broadly average across the school. For example, in science most pupils can handle numbers confidently, manipulate formulae and measure accurately in experiments. Lower attaining pupils demonstrate good graphical skills when drawing graphs of results of experiments. Data handling is satisfactory. Most pupils in geography are competent in using and interpreting a range of graphs, make good use of co-ordinates when using Ordnance Survey maps and are comfortable with handling numbers. In design and technology, most pupils weigh and measure confidently and accurately. In physical education pupils are able to measure times and distances reasonably accurately.
84. In work seen, standards are above average by the age of 16. Number skills are generally satisfactory for most pupils. Higher attaining pupils handle numbers mentally with confidence but lower attaining pupils still have difficulty in recalling tables, which causes them difficulty in handling numbers mentally. Algebraic skills are weak for all but the highest attaining pupils. In Year 10, higher attaining pupils understand different methods of solving quadratic equations but average attaining pupils are unsure about methods for solving linear equations. Many pupils are not yet clear about the application of ratios. Most pupils use calculators confidently and accurately. The concepts of shape and space are satisfactory; in design and technology, pupils show good spatial awareness. Data handling skills are good. For example, lower attaining pupils in science are able to plot graphs of rates of reaction confidently. Problem solving skills are satisfactory with most pupils able to identify patterns and rules, predict and test hypotheses in investigations.
85. The overall quality of teaching is good. As a result, the quality of learning is good and all pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve well as they move through the college. Teaching is best in Years 7 to 9 where pupils make the best progress. All teachers have good subject knowledge that helps them explain new concepts clearly and develop pupils' skills and understanding. Lesson planning is generally good; good links are made between lessons. For example, in a Year 9 lesson, the teacher reviewed the previous lesson well, partly for the benefit of pupils who had been absent but also to establish what all pupils could remember and to consolidate their learning. Good use is made of overhead projectors in some lessons to help teachers to maintain a good pace. Discussions are usually good; teachers attempt to involve as many pupils as possible in answering questions. Teachers manage and organise pupils well so that pupils usually listen attentively during discussions, concentrating on their tasks and co-operating well with each other when asked to share ideas. Teachers set clear expectations for pupils that produce good behaviour, although the presentation of results in books is not always as good as it might be. Starter activities are used well in many lessons to develop pupils' mental skills and extension activities in the textbooks provide suitable challenge for pupils. Appropriate methods are used to help pupils learn but opportunities are missed to use group activities and for pupils to learn independently; most of the learning is directed by the teacher. For example, in a Year 10 lesson, the pace of learning was slowed by a concentration on individual answering of textbook questions rather than using discussion of concepts to consolidate learning. Good use is made of different levels of tasks and resources to develop pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding. Effective use is made of homework to build upon pupils' learning, although it does not always provide suitable challenge for the higher attaining pupils especially for older

pupils. Marking of pupils' work is inconsistent and needs to be more rigorous; not enough comments are provided about what pupils should do to improve their work. Teachers do not use the results of assessment well enough to inform their planning and teaching.

86. The overall quality of learning is good. Higher, average and lower attaining pupils all make good progress during Years 7 to 9. Progress in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory; pupils usually achieve results in line with their standards at the end of Year 9, although there are still not enough of the higher grades obtained in GCSE examinations. Most pupils have a good attitude to learning that ensures that they acquire skills, knowledge and understanding well. Pupils apply themselves well to their tasks and are keen to learn. The progress of pupils with special educational needs is good because of good teaching and good support provided in lessons. For example, pupils in Year 9 made good progress with their understanding of angles due to the good support provided by both the teacher and support staff. Gifted and talented pupils make good progress in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory progress in Years 10 and 11.
87. Leadership and management are good. The previous head of department set clear educational direction that has been maintained by the acting head of department. There is a clear commitment to raising standards by all teachers. Action has already been taken to try to raise standards by targeting some classes at higher GCSE courses than usual. The subject provides a broad and balanced curriculum through good schemes of work with programmes of study well matched to pupils needs. They clearly identify where ICT can be used to support learning, although there are insufficient opportunities available at present to use computers. The curriculum is well supported by good assessment procedures. The results are used well to monitor pupils' progress as they move through the college. However, the quality of reports is unsatisfactory because they do not give sufficient information about how well pupils are doing, or what they need to do to improve. A good development plan includes appropriate priorities for the subject. Monitoring of teaching is taking place although it is not yet having sufficient impact on teaching; marking is inconsistent and too much learning is over-directed by teachers.
88. Improvements have been good since the previous inspection. The quality of teaching is better; teachers now control classes well, plan better and set higher expectations for pupils. Pupils' investigative, oral and mental skills have improved with the result that pupils in Years 7 to 9 now make good progress. However, girls still significantly outperform boys in GCSE examinations and the number of A* grades is still low.

SCIENCE

89. Science is a strength of the college. Standards are well above average at age 14 and 16 and are much higher than the standards seen on entry to the college at age 11. These are a result of much good and very good teaching, a very rich and interesting curriculum and very good management of the department. There is some scope to further extend the standards of the most able pupils in the GCSE examinations, but overall standards are very high.
90. In 2000, standards in the National Curriculum tests at age 14 were well above the national average. In relation to their standards on joining the college, pupils of all abilities are making very good progress and achieving very well. Standards were well above average compared with results for similar schools. Pupils' average points scores show that boys and girls achieved similar standards that were around two terms' progress ahead of those normally expected. Standards are better than in mathematics and much better than those in English. Over the past three years, standards have risen at a faster rate than nationally.
91. Standards in double award science at GCSE in 2000 were also well above average. Nearly all pupils find success in this course and the proportion entered is much higher than normal. Standards are higher than at the time of the previous inspection. The majority of higher attaining pupils make satisfactory progress from Year 9 but the proportion of pupils who achieve A* and A grades is below average, indicating a little underachievement. In contrast, many lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs achieve well in relation to their standards at age 14. Boys did better than boys nationally, but the girls' performance and achievement was much stronger overall. However, boys did better in double science than in most of their other subjects, indicating that they do well but there is still scope for further improvement in standards. Compared with similar schools, these results are well above

average. Over recent years, there have been occasions when results have not been quite as strong, but high standards have been maintained overall.

92. In work seen during the inspection, standards at age 14 are well above average. Pupils in Year 9 who have just taken their National Curriculum tests are already working confidently on their GCSE work. Higher attainers are working at a high level. They understand that the refraction of light occurs in a range of contexts and are able to use the particulate theory of matter to help explain how changing concentration changes how fast a chemical reaction proceeds. Average attaining pupils can use the particle theory of matter to explain changes of state and know how to test for carbohydrates, proteins and fats. Lower attainers in Year 9 are also doing work at a higher level than expected. They can use a key to group living things, can describe ways of separating mixtures and can carry out an investigation to study the effect of light on the rate of photosynthesis of pondweed. Year 8 pupils show average standards in their knowledge and classification of acids, alkalis and neutralisation and carry out practical work proficiently and safely. Year 7 pupils show a very secure understanding of simple electrical circuits and know the correct scientific conventions when drawing electrical symbols. Pupils have plentiful opportunities to carry out practical work and show good progress in carrying out a variety of extended investigations. Whilst they develop some good understanding of science in everyday life, the historical and multicultural perspectives of science receive less attention. Work is well presented and good attention is given to careful spelling and punctuation. Good approaches to note taking are encouraged and pupils' use of spider diagrams to pull together important information is a particularly powerful method of encouraging conceptual development.
93. In work seen, standards by the age of 16 are well above average and reflect the standards obtained in external examinations. The written work of pupils of all abilities in Year 11 shows high standards. Higher attainers use models of stellar evolution to explain the life cycle of stars and explain electrolysis well using the idea of migrating anions and cations. Average attaining pupils can identify anomalous results in experiments, use theories to explain how sound travels and calculate the critical angle at which light is totally internally reflected when it hits a plane surface. Lower attainers know that objects reflect light and can explain the difference between long and short sight. Lower attaining pupils show high levels of understanding and know the electronic configurations of a number of atoms. Higher attainers in the same year are very bright, alert and motivated and know how a range of monomers produced polymers with different properties and the difference between a thermoplastic and a thermosetting plastic and are able to show this using appropriate chemical equations. Standards are high in chemistry, physics and biology but the girls do better than the boys in investigations. GCSE coursework has improved since the last inspection and is done very well. High standards of presentation are maintained and ICT is used to particularly good effect to produce coursework with spreadsheets being used very well to produce graphs from the experimental data. Good standards of numeracy are evident and pupils of all abilities show very good listening skills.
94. Pupils of all abilities generally have very good attitudes to their work and relationships in class are positive. The only exception seen was in Year 8 where some pupils, mainly lower attaining boys, were reluctant to settle and were determined to disrupt the teaching to the detriment of others. However, this is not usual. The extent to which pupils with special educational needs engage in lessons and the extent to which nearly all pupils are keen to learn is striking. This reflects the strong teaching in the department and pupils' keenness to do well in science feeds through to their examination results.
95. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is good in all years. There is the potential for it to be even better through more rigorous monitoring and sharing of best practice. There are a number of reasons for the generally strong teaching, which has a very positive impact on pupils' standards. Specialist teachers' knowledge and understanding of the subject is very good and the rotational cycle of teaching groups allows the strengths of each teacher to be shared between pupils of all abilities. The teachers' enthusiasm for their subject comes over strongly and rubs off on the pupils. The teaching of basic skills is promoted through clear policies and developing outlines of what needs to be taught in literacy, numeracy and ICT in each year. A rich variety of stimulating and well-chosen activities is used in many lessons to help maintain pace and challenge. These also help pupils' learning to be broken down into small sections that are modified to suit pupils' capacities to concentrate. Some innovative methods are used to very good effect, such as the use of true and false flash cards and magnetic representations of atoms and ions, which are used to help pupils understand chemical bonding. Learning support

assistants are available to help pupils with special educational needs; their work is very well managed, they know the pupils very well and are effective in promoting pupils' standards and behaviour. Teachers' expectations are high but on occasions opportunities are missed to challenge the more able. Nearly all teachers start lessons with a good review of previous learning and make objectives clear. For example, in a Year 8 lesson on electrical circuits, the teacher's use of clear learning targets that were reviewed at the end of the lesson had a strong impact on pupils' learning. Lesson starts are generally much stronger than lesson ends. Work marked in lessons gives encouragement and helps point out achievement but does not give a clear view of strengths and weaknesses in learning. This is reflected in reports to parents where the targets are not sufficiently focused on indicating what needs to be improved. Pupils' knowledge and understanding of their own learning is good in Years 10 and 11 where they know their target grades well. However, in all years, a more systematic and detailed approach to target setting would help to raise standards further. Homework makes a very useful contribution to pupils' learning but there is scope to introduce some activities that contain more challenge.

96. Leadership and management are very good. Teachers are committed to improving the already strong provision. There are a number of contributory factors that have a positive impact on standards. The curriculum fully meets statutory requirements and has richness, variety and challenge. There is a very clear departmental handbook, which helps teachers work together as a united team. There are good opportunities for pupils to participate in a range of external visits and competitions, which enrich the curriculum. However, although priorities for development are clear, the success criteria in the improvement plan need to be more precise in order to help pinpoint progress and help an effective evaluation of the plan. In Years 10 and 11 there are insufficient textbooks to allow all pupils to have a book to take home and help support their learning. Storage in the preparation rooms should be reviewed in order to increase safety but there have been many improvements in the overall health and safety policy.
97. Progress since the previous inspection has been good. The very high standards at age 14 have been maintained and those at age 16 have improved. All the issues identified for development have been tackled very well and attention to investigative work has been particularly good. There is a good capacity to improve further and the department remains a beacon for other departments in the college.

ART AND DESIGN

98. Results at grades A*-C in GCSE examinations in 1999 and 2000 were at the national average with a high proportion of A* grades in 2000. The high standards reported in the previous report declined sharply and have now recovered.
99. In work seen during the inspection, standards by the age of 14 are average overall. Pupils enter the college with broadly average standards and their achievement in Years 7-9 is satisfactory. This is the result of good teaching that overcomes the lack of continuity caused by the way the curriculum is organised. These arrangements were criticised in the previous report and continue to hamper pupils' progress. In individual lessons and in the terms in which they have art, progress is often good and pupils can reach above average standards. An example of this is the high standards reached in a project with a visiting silk-batik artist, where Year 9 pupils were producing painted silk images of birds for a mobile for exhibition in a local arts festival. This showed a good level of research and development in written and visual work related to flight, with pupils' technical skills in their control of specialist tools and wax showing good application of the techniques they were learning. Progress in other skills, such as painting and drawing, is satisfactory, with less able pupils more adversely affected by the interruption to their art experience because they retain what they learn less well.
100. In work seen during the inspection, standards by the age of 16 are well above average. The increasingly large proportion of pupils who choose to study art at GCSE make very rapid progress from early in Year 10. A high degree of individual expressiveness is evident in these pupils' work from an early stage. They work in a good variety of media and size, including large-scale acrylic painting on canvas. Two and three-dimensional work is well represented in all pupils' portfolios. Pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs and talented pupils, achieve well. The proportion of potential A*/A grades is again high, with very few pupils' work indicating standards below C grade. Many pupils' work includes very good evidence of the advantageous effects of the rich range of extra-curricular visits they make to exhibitions

and galleries at home and abroad. The Barcelona visits, for example, have had very beneficial influences on pupils' architecture projects related to Gaudi's work there. Many pupils also continue studies related to the art of other cultures, which greatly enriches the cultural dimension of pupils' experience throughout the department.

101. Pupils' attitudes are mostly very positive. They enjoy art, listen well to teachers' explanations, demonstrations and advice and apply these well to their work. Pupils work purposefully in a relaxed atmosphere, chatting quietly. Relationships are good between pupils and with their teachers. This contributes extremely positively to pupils' very good levels of progress, particularly as they get older. Only one Year 8 class was marred by unsatisfactory behaviour on the part of lower attaining boys. Here, listening skills were poor, rendering pupils unable to sustain concentration during the lengthy double lesson despite good planning for changes of activity.
102. Teaching is good overall. In Years 7-9, it is never less than satisfactory and usually good. Teaching is very good in Years 10 and 11. Teachers' very good planning enables pupils to make the good progress they achieve in Years 7-9. Teachers plan their projects well to incorporate all aspects of the National Curriculum in the low time allocation. The basic skills, particularly literacy, are given good attention in planning and teaching. Teachers' good subject knowledge supports their effective teaching and development of key skills, such as painting and drawing, in Years 7-9, which pupils apply with increasing individuality and confidence in Years 10 and 11. Pupils gain knowledge and understanding of historical aspects of art well and develop their critical ability. The result is that by the end of Year 9 they have a secure foundation for the GCSE course, if they choose to follow it. Teachers' very good encouragement of pupils to look outwards and use extra-curricular opportunities, visits by artists, and so on, inventively in their visual work is a key factor in producing high levels of individuality in pupils' portfolios in Years 10 and 11. Teaching promotes good visual research and experimentation in which pupils find great enjoyment; useful, well-guided homework is given to extend tasks and projects. The very good relationships most groups share with their teachers inspire confidence in developing skills and a willingness to persevere with their visual explorations.
103. The previous report was extremely positive. Since then, standards declined significantly because of staffing difficulties. The new head of department has high ambitions for art in the college and has made a very good start in improving standards and progress. Curriculum arrangements in Years 7-9 still hamper progress. Pupils' very rapid development in Years 10 and 11 testifies to the success already achieved and indicates what is possible in earlier years. Better computer hardware and software are needed to enable pupils to use ICT creatively in their studies. More extensive exhibitions and displays of pupils' work in the public areas of the college would celebrate their considerable achievements more effectively.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

104. In 2000, teachers' assessed standards at age 14 as above average. Results in GCSE examinations in 2000 were above average when grades were aggregated; girls' performance was stronger than that of boys. When comparing pupils' overall performance across all subjects in 2000, their design and technology scores were better than the scores in their other subjects. Girls' results were significantly stronger but boys' results were not as good as their performance in other areas.
105. Standards in work seen during the inspection at the age of 14 are average. A significant number of gifted and talented pupils achieve higher levels. Overall achievement is good as pupils build a range of skills and techniques using different materials. Pupils have a good understanding of the design process and can produce detailed sequenced plans that they modify as needed. Pupils are aware of the constraints in using resources and good work is completed on sustainability of finite resources in resistant materials.
106. In work seen during the inspection, standards at age 16 are above average. Pupils mature in their designing and making. Their use of tools and strategies for research and investigation improve. Good attention given to a diary of designing and making ensures deadlines are met. Pupils build on their basic skills from Years 7-9. They have a good command of technical vocabulary as well as using numeracy skills to help with working accurately and to scale as seen in the resistant materials projects; for example, the design of a skateboard park and the

challenge of moving from designing a bird table to a gazebo. Many boys have had difficulty in sustaining their efforts during their major project; the department has tackled this by introducing a GNVQ course. This course involves pupils in planning to meet short-term targets within the units of the course. Pupils respond well to this method of working and results are positive. The course predominantly attracts boys. An alternative course that attracts mainly girls is child development. Pupils consistently achieve well and in 2000 the results for GCSE grades A*-C were well above the national average.

107. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress. The practical aspects of design and technology motivate pupils; their success in practical work lifts their self-esteem. The department makes good use of worksheets designed to support particular learning difficulties and learning support assistants are well integrated into the lessons, helping to improve standards. Higher attaining pupils have the opportunity of extended work at the end of each module to ensure they reach their potential, according to the college motto.
108. Pupils enjoy design and technology and their attitudes are positive. They are proud of the work they produce. Good displays as well as portfolios of records from 1997, as seen in textiles, ensure pupils are exposed to a range of designing techniques. Pupils learn how to work amicably in teams with very good results, sharing their ideas and evaluations, giving them the chance to reflect on what could be improved. Behaviour is good. Teachers seldom have to impose sanctions because pupils' self-discipline is apparent in all aspects of practical work. In Year 8 theory lessons, boys find concentration difficult and the immature behaviour of a substantial minority has a detrimental impact on other pupils' learning.
109. The quality of teaching is good and promotes good learning. Teaching throughout the department is characterised by the work of enthusiastic technologists with a passion for their subject who challenge pupils' knowledge and understanding. For example, a food technology 'healthy eating' practical lesson gave the opportunity for independent planning and research, as well as introducing the social skills of eating together in small groups. Teachers' practical skills are shown in good demonstrations that ensure new techniques are fully understood. The department team has a clear understanding of the special educational needs of pupils, particularly those with an individual education plan. Planning effectively harmonises pupils' needs into the lesson plans as well as sharply focusing on the requirements of the National Curriculum. Teachers' plans include application of the basic skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT to consolidate understanding of technical vocabulary, accuracy and presentation. Teachers are good role models in terms of respect and support of each other, which has a positive impact on pupils' attitudes. This makes learning rigorous, individualised and fruitful.
110. Some equipment in the department is old. Lack of specialist equipment holds up progress, frustrating pupils and teachers alike. For example, there is only one pillar drill in resistant materials, which restricts the progress of practical work. Assessment methods used by teachers are very well documented. The results of each module are averaged out over the year and compared against the final module to identify progress and help teachers in their standardisation of marks and modification of the curriculum. However, teachers do not transfer the module targets to the end of year reports in a way that would inform parents of action needed to improve.
111. Management of the department is good. Staff work as a team. Technical support is good in food technology but the long-term absence of one technician is having a detrimental impact on preparation in resistant materials and engineering. Development planning is good and progress is monitored. Accommodation in several rooms in the department is out of date, inappropriate and does not match curriculum needs. Computers are used particularly well for research, design and presentation. The effect can be seen in the improvement in higher level results in GCSE and vocational courses.
112. Improvements since the previous inspection are satisfactory. The department has made effective curriculum changes and now challenges more able pupils appropriately. The management structure and display have also improved. Issues remaining include reduced curriculum time at Key Stage 3, which fails to match national recommendations, cramped conditions and some health and safety issues, such as dust extraction in resistant materials.

GEOGRAPHY

113. This is a very effective subject. Although teachers' assessments indicate that standards by the age of 14 are close to average, work seen during the inspection shows it to be above. Standards for the college's more able pupils are well above average. Results in GCSE examinations have been close to the national averages for the last four years. The work of the present Years 10 and 11 indicates that present standards are above average.
114. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve well in relation to their previous knowledge of the subject. As a result of skilful teaching, pupils' progress is good throughout the college and gains in subject knowledge and understanding are significant. By the age of 14, most pupils have a very good knowledge and understanding of geographic processes and patterns and of environmental themes. For example, in an excellent Year 9 lesson, pupils were already using appropriate geographic terms and were well able to evaluate complicated information on the quality of housing, and present their findings to the class.
115. Standards are above average by the age of 16. The vast majority of pupils are confidently able to interpret geographic information, make reasoned judgements and offer explanations for patterns. The impressive use of technical vocabulary and teachers' understanding of the subject are well harnessed to teach the higher order skills of making interpretations and offering explanations. In an excellent Year 10 lesson, pupils of all abilities were very well able to interpret the demographic transition model and apply it to actual geographic situations. Although no Year 11 classes were seen, a scrutiny of their work, in particular an examination of their coursework files, supports the view of sustained good achievement. In their written work, higher attaining pupils show a very good understanding of both physical and human processes, although lower attaining pupils are often content to offer superficial explanations for these. In preparing for their coursework, most pupils have produced rationales for their small case studies that are clear, show a good understanding of the topic and are well focused.
116. Pupils with special educational needs achieve equally as well as a result of a skilful match of classroom tasks to their individual needs. A good example was a very good Year 8 lesson on natural hazards. Very good progress was made as a result of the teacher's skilful use of pair and group work and "brain storming" to illustrate and extend pupils' understanding of the nature and effects of these hazards.
117. In nearly all lessons, good relationships and behaviour, fostered by enthusiastic and stimulating teaching, contribute strongly to the positive attitude to learning. The majority of pupils respond well. They are eager, enthusiastic learners who readily engage in productive group and pair work, helping each other to search for information and solve problems.
118. Teaching is very good. In the great majority of lessons, the very good subject knowledge of teachers is skilfully transmitted to pupils through lively exposition. It is invariably clear, stimulating and authoritative, drawing on many topical examples to illustrate and bring to life geographic themes. Very good use is made of audio-visual aids and visiting speakers to reinforce pupils' understanding. For example, in a Year 9 lesson on sustainable development, slides were used very well and a visiting speaker made a valuable contribution to stimulate pupils to acquire a genuine sense of place for Nepal. Learning is accelerated in nearly all lessons by the very skilful management of pupils through high expectations of behaviour. Teachers create a relaxed yet productive atmosphere in classes which is highly conducive to learning. Teachers expect much of pupils, as in a Year 10 lesson on population where the study of the causes of population growth is more common at A Level. Teachers encourage pupils to persevere when faced with difficulty and, as a result, they readily engage in classroom activities, working with diligence and enthusiasm. Higher attaining pupils in particular are developing a deep understanding of complex geographic issues, such as the environmental conflict arising from urban development. Questioning is often very effectively used to challenge and develop pupils' understanding. The department skilfully uses a wide range of learning activities that are challenging, interesting and usually very well matched to the needs of individual pupils. These are having a positive impact on achievement, particularly that of higher attaining pupils. Group work, role-play and simulations are very well used in enabling pupils to challenge and support each other in their learning. This was well demonstrated in a Year 8 lesson on "why flooding occurred", when pupils selected "clues" to solve this "mystery" and then shared their finding with the class. In all lessons, a brisk and purposeful pace fosters very good levels of concentration and interest. Time is used to the full with teachers fully engaging pupils in productive and

interesting tasks. These are invariably well matched to pupils' prior learning, resulting in them maintaining interest and becoming active learners. Teachers' careful planning accelerates learning in all lessons. They design activities that encourage pupils to "find out" rather than being "told". The confidence of teachers not to over direct pupils in these lessons is rewarded by their sense of achievement at their discovery of knowledge. Homework effectively supports pupils' interest and understanding of their work. Many tasks are set which encourage the development of research skills, particularly the use of computers to search for and present information. Nearly all pupils are keen to succeed and most understand how well they are achieving. Pupils' work is regularly and accurately marked but there are too few helpful and supportive comments to encourage them to learn from their mistakes and improve.

119. The subject is well led and managed by an efficient and effective head of department working in close partnership with an enthusiastic geographer. There is a very good team spirit and a genuine shared commitment to high standards. The department identifies clear, quantified targets for improvements and devises strategies to reach them. The shared vision of the department fully matches that of the college. The head of department is beginning to have a strong impact on creating a culture of self-evaluation in the subject. Leadership would be even further enhanced through a more systematic approach to monitoring the work of the department through sampling of pupils' work and the use of performance data, which allows the department to compare achievements with those of similar schools.
120. Progress since the last inspection has been good. Standards have been maintained and the quality of teaching further improved. Good use is now beginning to be made of computers to extend and enhance pupils' learning.

HISTORY

121. In assessments carried out by teachers in 2000, standards were above average at age 14. Work seen during the inspection confirms that standards remain above average. The proportions of pupils gaining grades A*-C and grades A*-G in GCSE examinations in 2000 were in line with the national averages. This represents a considerable improvement over the past few years. Girls' GCSE are higher than the national average. Boys' results are lower than the national average and the number of boys opting for the subject in Year 10 is relatively small. Although there have been some improvements in the number of both boys and girls opting for the subject since the previous inspection, fewer pupils choose history than other comparable subjects. Work seen during the inspection shows that this year's cohort is on course to gain similar results to last year's.
122. By the age of 14, pupils have generally secure recall of the history they study and use their knowledge and understanding to narrate and explain events and situations. They develop a good range of historical skills. For example, pupils understand some of the consequences of the Treaty of Versailles and its effects on German politics. The work of higher attaining pupils is accurately written and well presented; average and lower attaining pupils are able to provide more detail in their verbal responses than in answers that require them to respond at length in writing. Most pupils are beginning to show good comprehension of documentary and pictorial sources, although skills in evaluating their suitability and reliability are less well developed and they often struggle to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of different types of sources for particular enquiries.
123. Pupils achieve well in Years 7-9. At the beginning of Year 7 pupils come into the college with average standards. The majority of pupils make good progress by the time they reach the end of

Year 9. Lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs make similar rates of progress as those of their peers, especially in those lessons in which there is additional classroom support. This is particularly evident from the way in which pupils increasingly show independence in following lines of enquiry and use their knowledge to analyse and explain events and changes. Written work is carefully and neatly presented and increasingly structured and sustained. It shows increasing attention to detail. However, progress in the analysis and evaluation of historical sources is satisfactory rather than good. Pupils need more systematic opportunities to use documentary and pictorial sources, evaluating their suitability and reliability to show understanding to different views of the same event or person.

124. Pupils reach average standards by the age of 16. They have a good understanding of a range of historical facts, situations and characters and are able to use their knowledge and understanding to form opinions and evaluations of the periods and topics they study. Their recall of this is accurate and sufficiently detailed. This was evident, for example, in a Year 10 lesson when pupils remembered facts about the Treaty of Versailles. Most pupils make satisfactory use of note making and planning skills when preparing written tasks, although pupils are less confident when analysing and evaluating evidence than when using their knowledge and understanding to narrate or explain historical events. Progress is good overall in relation to pupils' standards at the end of Year 9, although somewhat uneven, with achievement in the skills required particularly in Paper 2 of the GCSE examination being only satisfactory. In order to raise standards further, the department needs to resolve this imbalance.
125. The attitudes of pupils of all ages are good. The behaviour in lessons of a small number of pupils, mainly boys in Year 8, is inconsiderate and serves as a distraction to others in the class. In most lessons, however, behaviour is good. Most pupils work hard, show good levels of concentration and settle to work quickly. Nearly all pupils take care to present their work neatly.
126. Teaching is good overall with some very good features. There have been significant improvements since the previous inspection, particularly in the greater emphasis on providing work that matches the learning needs of all pupils, and in the provision of support for pupils with special educational needs. The teaching of revision and examination techniques to pupils in Years 10 and 11 is also more effective. This now needs to be linked to a clearer emphasis on key historical questions, such as why women got the vote in 1918, so that pupils understand exactly what they are going to do and why. In order to raise standards further, particularly in Years 10 and 11, teaching now needs to focus more systematically on teaching the skills of analysing and evaluating historical evidence in order to test its reliability and usefulness. There are many strengths in the teaching which enable pupils to learn effectively. Teachers are enthusiastic, committed and work well as a team. Resources are used creatively and with flair. For example, in a Year 9 lesson pupils used a postcard with a photograph of the teacher's father and friends taken while they were fighting in the First World War to examine the kind of letters soldiers wrote to their families and why. In some of the best lessons seen, questions were used very effectively to motivate and to enable pupils to share ideas and become more confident learners. In one lesson, for example, every pupil answered a question in the first ten minutes. Pupils are provided with good opportunities to see and use first-hand evidence through visits, for example to the Imperial War Museum, and through good use of the local environment. Strategies to develop pupils' knowledge and understanding are effective and there is a good balance between imparting information to pupils, for example telling the story of the experiences of a suffragette who was force-fed, and encouraging them to enquire and research on their own account. This was evident, for example, in a Year 7 lesson where the previous week's homework task had been to research various aspects of Native American Indian life. Teachers regularly assess and test pupils' work against National Curriculum standards but there is scope to share this information more frequently with pupils. Only one teacher is involved with teaching GCSE history, which makes standardisation and moderation of marking impossible – the department would benefit from reviewing its strategies for ensuring that good practice is shared.
127. This is a well-managed department. Teachers function well as a team and have a clear commitment to the subject. Specialist history rooms have been developed as effective learning environments with impressive displays of key words, posters, artefacts and pupils' work. However, these huts were originally intended as temporary classrooms and are cramped, making it difficult to cope with some kinds of group work. One teacher teaches in several different rooms, which is unsatisfactory; one room, for example, is too large with poor acoustics, making it difficult to keep an eye on everyone in the room. Accommodation was an issue at the

time of the previous inspection. Nevertheless, improvement since the last inspection has been good overall.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

128. Information and communication technology (ICT) is taught in a carousel arrangement with drama during Years 7, 8 and 9. This is a recent innovation to give all pupils the opportunity to use computers. In addition, some departments across the curriculum plan the use of computers to support the teaching of their subject. For example, design and technology and English use ICT to consolidate and promote learning. In Years 10 and 11, pupils do not have formal access to computers. There is a voluntary after-school class where skills are assessed through modular units that deal mainly with word processing, spreadsheets and databases. This course does not meet National Curriculum requirements and pupils in Years 10 and 11 do not receive their statutory entitlement.
129. Teachers' assessment of standards at age 14 in 2000 was below average because of the discontinuity of the course and its shared curriculum time with drama. Overall standards at age 16 are below average. There are no formal examinations. Until 2000, a number of pupils entered for an examination in text processing. Numbers entering and results have diminished over the last three years because pupils do not see a voluntary activity as a serious curriculum opportunity.
130. In work seen during the inspection, standards at age 14 reflect improvement and are now average with the greatest strengths in communication. In Year 7, pupils take some time to settle into ICT. The impact of the disjointed allocation of curriculum time for ICT, together with the lack of formal records of computer work in primary school, fails to identify a baseline starting point of competence. The course uses interesting topics to maintain pupils' interest; for example, they use a writing guide to develop a flyer promoting South Molton as a tourist attraction. Lack of Internet access restricts the choices for clip art and importing images from other sites such as the tourist board. Shared access and inappropriate working spaces hinder pupils' individual progress. However, the planned modules are action-packed and pupils are motivated into independent activities where fun and finding out are key elements of learning. In Year 7 pupils were challenged to design a personal web page. Enthusiasm buzzed in the room as pupils used animation to improve their web site. This challenging approach fired pupils' imagination and ideas. In Years 7-9, pupils use a wide range of programmes to develop their use of spreadsheets, databases, desktop publishing and E-mail.
131. Achievement in Years 7-9 is satisfactory, helped by most departments attempting to teach or use some ICT and in most cases it is part of curricular planning. For example, in science, pupils in Year 7 use sensors and control to log changes in light and dark on a model globe, to show length of day and heating at different latitudes. This is followed in Years 8 and 9 by spreadsheets and charts to look for patterns in the solar system. The lack of an ICT co-ordinator prevents the formal monitoring of provision or progress. Pupils do not have knowledge of their standards and achievement until their Year 9 report. This misses the opportunity for pupils to motivate themselves.
132. The standards seen at age 16 are below average because provision is inadequate and the skills learned in Years 7-9 diminish. Pupils generally work well when given access to computers. For example, in Year 10 GNVQ engineering, where a design package was used to develop 3D designing skills and to enhance pupils' learning by the use of control and modelling. Work in child development and food technology teaches pupils methods for data capture and how to analyse their results. During Years 10 and 11, pupils continue to use data logging in the 'speed' and 'feed the world' units. In music, pupils are able to use a programme to extend their creativity in composition. The art department has led the way in developing a very good web page, which celebrates pupils' work and establishes a contact point for the department. The college can see this as the forerunner to Intranet across the college when the new network is in place. A major contribution from subjects, such as English and modern foreign languages, teaches pupils how to create good quality presentations that share information in styles suitable for a range of

audiences. Despite these contributions by departments in all years, the lack of a specialist computer course in Years 10 and 11 makes pupils achievement at this stage unsatisfactory.

133. Standards for pupils with special educational needs are in line with expectations outlined in their individual education plans. Progress made by age 14, is good because the quality of their work on screen is as good as that of their peers and this raises their self-esteem and confidence. Progress slows in Years 10 and 11 because of the lack of access and teaching time. Learning support assistants make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning.
134. Attitudes, behaviour and personal development are good in ICT. Pupils respect the equipment they use, even when it lets them down. Fun is a great motivator in ICT; the enjoyment has a positive impact on confidence and helps to improve pupils' attitudes through success in the modules of Years 7-9.
135. Teaching in Years 7-9 is satisfactory overall. It is unsatisfactory in Years 10 and 11 because there are no planned lessons and teaching in departments across the school is not coordinated to ensure that pupils receive their entitlement. Specialist teachers share their skills and enthusiasm with other teachers. Detailed planning and clear objectives make pupils' targets clear. Teachers' choice of interesting topics, which relate to pupils' personal interest, motivates learning. For example, preparing a poster about the use of the computer room helped to underpin the rules for computer use. Effective teacher feedback in class helps to establish understanding. Pupils know how to improve their work. Issues that slow progress are associated with the lack of a briefing area and the lack of a large screen monitor for whole class teaching, which wastes time and misses the opportunity for consolidation of learning. Assessment has been co-ordinated and grades are fed into the ICT management system so that eventually marks can be averaged and compared. Homework is set when necessary. Teachers are often frustrated at the limited access to computers in their departments. There are departments who are still awaiting their government training for subject specific use of computers in the classroom. The useful curriculum map showing what computer skills are taught where, is not monitored well enough to ensure that teachers focus on the part they can play in promoting ICT as a basic skill.
136. Progress since the previous inspection is unsatisfactory. The number of computers has improved, although still below the national average ratio of computers to pupils. The inconsistency of the cross-curricular opportunities and standards remain issues to be dealt with.
137. Management of ICT is unsatisfactory because it lacks the guiding hand of a curriculum leader and the policies and procedures of a departmental handbook. There is also a lack of a whole-school management approach to the co-ordination of ICT, which affects standards. A technician has recently been appointed but her role is unclear to teaching staff.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

French and German

138. At the ages of 14 and 16, standards in French are below average and lower than might be expected when considering pupils' standards on entry to the college. In 2000, the proportion of pupils assessed by their teachers as working at the nationally expected level at the age of 14 was below average and this was confirmed in work seen during the inspection. Standards in German, which is taught to higher attaining pupils for one period per week in Year 9 and is also an option at GCSE, are as high as might be expected for the amount of time allocated.
139. Results in GCSE examinations in 2000 were below the national average for the proportion of pupils gaining A*-C grades in French. Girls' results were close to the national average, but those of boys were well below. At grades A*-G, the proportion achieving a pass grade was average. In German, although results have consistently been above the national average, the small numbers of pupils have achieved less well than in their other subjects. In 2000, they achieved on average one grade lower in German than in their other GCSE examinations.

140. In work seen during the inspection in French in Years 7-9, standards are below average. Standards in listening, speaking, and reading are closer to average than standards in writing. This is because in most lessons teachers make good use of French so that pupils become confident at understanding. Speaking is not always developed as much as possible, but most pupils are able to answer simple questions, speaking with reasonable accents. Writing was identified as a weakness at the previous inspection and not enough has been done to raise standards of written work. Progress in Year 9 is less good than in Years 7 and 8 because higher attainers who choose to study German only have two lessons of French each week. The higher ability pupils who do not opt for German have to be taught with other classes during this period and this is distracting for all pupils. As a result, many higher and middle attainers do not reach the standards of which they are capable. Lower attainers make similar progress to others. They usually do the same work as the rest of the class. Progress in German is slow because of the small amount of time allocated to it. Opportunities for conversations and group work are used well, particularly in Years 7 and 8. The new textbook in Year 7 is proving popular, as it is helping to develop the skills required in the Curriculum 2000 guidelines. By Year 9, most pupils can understand basic French that describes themselves and where they live. Higher attaining pupils are able to use the past tense in sentences of writing, but there is very little extended writing. Although progress in lessons is satisfactory, pupils' overall achievement is unsatisfactory because it is adversely affected by lack of time and, by staffing changes which have had an impact on continuity. In lessons, there are no significant differences in the standards of boys and girls.
141. In work seen in French during the inspection in Years 10 and 11, standards are below average and achievement is unsatisfactory. Some higher attaining pupils are able to express themselves well in speaking and writing, although many show little understanding of basic grammar. This means that they are unable to write as freely and accurately as they should. Middle attainers, particularly boys, do not make progress that matches their ability. This is because they have been affected by the curriculum arrangements in Years 7-9. Where it is not possible to divide the half-year group into three classes, average attaining pupils thrive less well because work is not geared closely enough to their needs. Progress in lessons is satisfactory for most pupils. Again, the unsatisfactory curriculum and the impact of staffing changes affect achievement. In work seen during the inspection in German, standards are above average. Some higher attaining pupils are able to write at length in accurate German and all make rapid progress in the small group. Pupils have very good understanding of spoken German because the teacher uses it consistently as the means of communication in lessons. Each year, there are a few pupils who join the college in Year 10 having studied German as their only modern foreign language at their previous school. This means that not all pupils are higher attainers and these pupils tend to do less well than the others. Standards in German are higher than in French, as would be expected from a group consisting largely of higher attaining pupils.
142. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. However, it is good or better in almost half the lessons. Teachers have good knowledge and understanding of their languages and make good use of French and German in most lessons. This is a positive feature. One important issue raised in the last report has not been adequately dealt with: the consistent development of writing skills. This is successfully achieved in German, but not in French. Pupils are actively involved in lessons, especially in Years 7 and 8, working well in pairs and groups. There is not enough difference in the tasks for pupils of differing abilities. This means that some higher attainers are not sufficiently stretched and some lower attainers are not adequately supported. The best lessons have a range of activities that cover the four skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing. A very good Year 8 French lesson enabled pupils to make very good progress in their learning because it was carefully planned, with a good variety of activities in the four skills. It was conducted at a very good pace and gave pupils the chance to consolidate work they had done before. Pupils took their oral work seriously because the teacher made good use of French and had high expectations of them. Pupils worked with enthusiasm and diligence. At the end of the lesson pupils were aware of what they had learned and knew what was now expected of them. It was a positive experience for the whole class. A Year 9 French lesson was unsatisfactory because the pupils did not respond well to the teacher. Their unsatisfactory behaviour was not dealt with adequately. The lesson was planned carefully enough and the content was interesting but the pupils would not co-operate. As a result not enough learning took place. Pupils were working at a lower level than they should have been because the teacher

lacked the necessary strategies to manage their behaviour. Teachers use regular assessments to judge the progress their pupils are making, and they mark work regularly. Pupils in Years 7-9 usually know the National Curriculum levels at which they are working and they are given some guidance on how to improve their work. There is some effective use of ICT, for example in writing a curriculum vitae and a newspaper article. The quality of learning is satisfactory throughout. When classroom assistants support pupils with special educational needs, their progress is enhanced. Staff changes and curriculum deficiencies have affected overall achievement.

143. Pupils show interest in their work and the great majority have a positive attitude to it throughout the college. This is an improvement since the previous inspection. Most take pleasure in expressing themselves orally in French and German, especially in the lower years. They work sensibly in pairs and groups.
144. Management of the department is unsatisfactory because there has not been enough improvement since the previous inspection. The head of department has monitored teaching and marking so that there is some consistency. Teachers in the department work well together and share a commitment to succeed. Frequent staff changes have hindered the development of appropriate schemes of work. It has not been possible to arrange study visits on a regular basis. In order to secure more improvement, particularly in the achievement of boys, the department should reconsider the curriculum in Years 7-9. Teaching schemes should be rewritten so that they offer better guidance to teachers and include strategies for improving writing.

MUSIC

145. In 2000, teachers assessed standards at the age of 14 to be well above average. These standards were not matched in work seen during the inspection. Seven out of the nine pupils entered for GCSE examinations in 2000, obtained grades within the range A*-C and, although this number is too small for meaningful comparison with national figures, it is a high proportion.
146. In work seen during the inspection, standards at the age of 14 are average. In relation to standards when pupils join the college, this represents satisfactory achievement. Pupils have a sound understanding of theoretical ideas, such as chords, and can read standard notation and locate notes on instruments. In performance, they struggle in the application of basic techniques such as appropriate fingering, co-ordination of right and left hands and synchronizing movement with beats. Compositions and improvisations often show good imagination and invention, for example when Year 9 pupils developed a soundtrack to accompany a film sequence. Pupils develop a good understanding of various musical styles and composers and essential musical vocabulary. However, knowledge and understanding of the musical elements, such as form, texture, and dynamics are sometimes uncertain. Thirty or so pupils, a modest proportion, enhance their musical attainment with additional lessons on instruments. Some of these achieve good grades in Associated Board examinations, and one pupil has obtained a place in the County Youth Orchestra. The college band and choir offer further opportunities for pupils and are well supported for concerts and the annual production.
147. By the age of 16, standards remain broadly average. The small number of pupils choosing to study GCSE music achieve well in relation to their standards at the end of Year 9. The pupils who choose the subject include a number who are learning to play instruments and some who, whilst they enjoy the subject, are not outstanding performers. This gives rise to a wide range of standards within the groups. The groups also vary from year to year. Some good compositions, written for performance in the musical 'Kes', were performed well and showed effective understanding and use of devices such as ostinato (repeated accompaniment melodies) and chord sequences. On the other hand, some computer-enhanced compositions began very well but failed to develop initial ideas beyond good opening statements.
148. The quality of teaching is satisfactory in Years 7-9 and good in Years 10 and 11. The quality of learning matches the quality of teaching. In Years 7-9, the teacher has to plan for large classes in the limited accommodation available. Practical lessons develop high volumes of musical

sound in a confined space, making concentration difficult for pupils and testing management skills to the limits. That such limits are rarely exceeded says much for the good relationships between teacher and pupils and the generally positive attitudes most pupils have towards the subject. Lessons are well managed and effective use is made of time and resources to promote pupils learning. Assessment procedures are satisfactory but a more rigorous approach, for example analysing details of pupils' difficulties in playing, would support lesson planning and help to drive up standards further. In Years 10 and 11, classes are much smaller and a more individual approach to pupils' learning is possible. Interactions between teacher and pupils are productive. In Years 7-9, composing and performing lessons are adversely affected by the size of classes and the limited accommodation. A good Year 7 lesson, working on some gamelan figures, did not develop as quickly as it should have because of the difficulty of concentrating in the volume of sound. Nevertheless, because of good planning and organisation, good progress was made by all pupils including those with special educational needs, and the most able. Pupils are enabled to acquire their musical knowledge, understanding and skills satisfactorily in Years 7-9. Progress in Years 10 and 11 is better because of smaller class sizes. Pupils who have additional instrumental lessons make faster progress in many of the activities. A positive feature of lessons was the way that more able pupils often helped those who were struggling.

149. There has been satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection. GCSE groups, although small, have become a regular feature. Results up to 2000 have shown a gradual improvement. Instrumental tuition continues in spite of considerable difficulties at one stage. A computer using 'Cakewalk' software has been acquired, but it lacks a printer and this limits its effectiveness as a support for learning. The old, dilapidated grand piano, long redundant, continues to occupy valuable space in a room where space is at a premium.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

150. Teachers assessed pupils' standards at the age of 14 in 2000 to be average. Work seen during the inspection was at this standard in athletics and better in tennis. The 2000 GCSE results were well above average for the proportions of pupils gaining grades A*-C and A*-G. Work of the present Year 11 shows a similar standard and an increasing number of girls are choosing the option. Pupils' achievement is good as they move through the college.
151. Work seen during the inspection was affected by an outbreak of foot and mouth disease, which prohibited use of the playing fields. In the restricted circumstances, standards at the age of 14 are average overall. The basic skills of sprinting and throwing in athletics are efficiently performed and understood, but in hop, step and jump pupils have co-ordination challenges to overcome. Tennis skills are being applied in game situations and rallies are developing. One Year 8 class demonstrated above average performance in an athletic circuit but, in another Year 8 class, minor disruptions lowered the standard. Change-over practices in relay running are practised with vigour but little understanding. Year 7 participate eagerly in tennis and are beginning to strike the ball accurately.
152. No Year 11 practical work was seen during the inspection because the pupils were on study leave. From assessment information, practical standards at the age of 16 are above average overall. In work seen during the inspection, GCSE theory work is well above average. Written work shows evidence of good research and is well presented with diagrammatic illustrations. Information and communication technology is being used to acquire further knowledge. The work shows very good progress in Years 10 and 11. The GCSE group in Year 10 shows well-developed skills in rounders. Tactics and strategies are

understood and skills of striking and fielding are advanced. Throwing fast and accurately is not at the same standard. The whole of Year 10 demonstrates an understanding of weight training, indoor rounders skills and very good tennis performance and knowledge. Pupils of all abilities perform at an above average level because of subtle matching of tasks to their abilities. Pupils evaluate their work well, which assists progress in practical activities

153. Overall, attitudes to physical education are satisfactory. Up to the age of 14, most activities are performed with enthusiasm and energy. However, disruptions mar progress in a few lessons and concentration wanes. From the age of 14, pupils who participate in physical education lessons have a positive attitude to the practical activities taught. The relationships between pupils is good and the different groups mix well together. In the mixed gender sessions, encouragement is given to pupils of all abilities and no one is excluded. Many Year 10 pupils in the GCSE group take responsibility for their own learning and work well together. Pupils show a positive attitude to extra-curricular activities.

154. Teaching is good overall. A particular strength of teaching is the way in which teachers plan lessons. For example, in an excellent Year 10 rounders lesson, learning and progress were rapid because of the high level of organisation and the teacher's class management skills and knowledge of the game. Learning is good in tennis because teachers use a well-chosen variety of activities to maintain pace and tasks are matched closely to pupils' different abilities. The indoor athletics sessions show good use of resources and challenges at different levels to promote progress. Class control was weak in one lesson seen during the inspection. Some pupils became disruptive and progress was unsatisfactory because they did not follow the tasks set. The non-specialist teachers in weight training and tennis show enthusiasm and expertise. Objectives are clearly set and constructive feedback is used at the end of lessons. Teaching is successful in maintaining pupils' concentration and progress. For example, in a Year 9 girls' tennis lesson, the teacher motivated pupils in a well-organised lesson so that they made good progress in basic skills. A Year 7 class made good progress in tennis because they worked hard on skills and improved in partner practices. Groups in Year 10 are making satisfactory progress in rounders, weight training and tennis because they are taught by teachers who are sensitive to their needs.

155. Leadership and management are very good. The curriculum meets statutory requirements and has been updated to meet the requirements of Curriculum 2000. Assessment in Years 7-9 has been fully modified to meet the new levels listed in the Physical Education Curriculum Document. GCSE work is assessed efficiently and accurately. Results are very good and improving. About 40 per cent of the college's population take part in extra-curricular activities that enhance learning. Twelve staff from the college contribute to the programme. A few parents and outside specialists assist in coaching. The department development plan sets appropriate targets for the future. A positive ethos has been established. Good relationships and personal development are promoted through participation. The indoor accommodation is good with a gymnasium and a sports hall. The outdoor facilities are also good with playing fields, an extensive hard area and use of extra tennis courts at the nearby club. The replacement of gymnastic apparatus is not yet planned and the teaching of gymnastics is adversely affected.

156. Good progress has been made since the previous inspection. GCSE results have improved to a very high standard. Extra-curricular activities are providing opportunities for pupils of all abilities. Development planning is well documented. There are very good community links. Assessment of pupils' progress is measured against the relevant criteria but the reports do not pass on this information to parents.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

157. Standards in work seen during the inspection are above average at the ages of 14 and 16. This is due to the commitment of the head of department to improving standards, and to good teaching that leads to good learning in lessons. These standards were not, however, reflected in GCSE examination results in 2000. Although in line with national figures, results were comparatively amongst the least successful in the college. This is because many of the most able pupils choose not to take the examination, the time allocated to the subject is insufficient and there were staffing difficulties last year which affected the continuity of learning.

158. In work seen during the inspection, standards by the age of 14 are above average. Pupils not only know the central beliefs and practices of Christianity and other world religions, but can also give an informed and well-argued account of their own and others' values and commitments, in the light of different religious views on contemporary moral issues. For example, Year 9 pupils in their study of prejudice in the modern world can effectively evaluate and examine the force of religious beliefs in combating issues such as racism and genocide.

159. In work seen during the inspection, standards at the age of 16 are above average. Pupils know some of the conceptual beliefs of Christianity and can use them to attempt to provide answers to the fundamental questions of life. For example, Year 10 pupils can relate with sensitivity and poignancy the religious concepts concerning decisions about genetic selection in their study of the moral dilemmas that turn about genetically based diseases such as Friedrich's Ataxia.

160. Pupils' achievement is good in Years 7-9. Pupils have strong analytical ability and consolidate their prior learning with appreciation of concepts such as the application of prayer as an act of devotion. Pupils learn facts well to build upon their prior knowledge with additional information about artefacts used in religious ceremonies and customs. The good rate of achievement is not maintained in Years 10 and 11. Here, achievement is only satisfactory. This is mainly due to the lack of time devoted to the subject and the fact that some pupils, particularly in the non-examined or short course lessons, do not always apply themselves to their studies with sufficient rigour, especially in the completion of homework. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well and make good progress between Years 7 and 11. However, gifted and able pupils are not always fully stretched.

161. In Year 8, there is a minority of pupils, mostly boys of lower ability, whose behaviour is not conducive to good learning. However, the response of the vast majority of pupils is good. They concentrate and they show pride in their work, although some pupils' presentation could be improved. Study and discussion of a range of ideas about their own and other people's values and beliefs, to which they demonstrate sensitivity and tolerance, enhance pupils' personal development. Pupils' positive behaviour and response, which is often a direct result of good teaching and classroom management, is an important factor in their learning.

162. Teaching is good overall and occasionally very good with no lessons being less than satisfactory. Teachers have good knowledge of their subject. Lessons are well-prepared and clear aims and challenging activities promote pupils' learning. In the best lessons, planning is augmented by the use of a range of teaching strategies and resources that stimulate pupils' interest. Teachers have high expectations both of pupils' work and behaviour and there is a strong link between good teaching and good behaviour. A characteristic of teaching is the teachers' belief in the value of the subject, which is reflected in their enthusiasm for it. This is infectious and leads to good learning. For example, in a Year 7 lesson on Chinese creation stories, the teacher used to good effect his own cartoon version of documented Chinese traditional stories of creation to stimulate similar responses from the pupils as they interpreted the concepts of

“Yin” and “Yang” in their own way. Their interest led to sustained concentration and thus to good learning. Homework is set and marked regularly.

163. In Years 7-9, religious education is planned effectively, promotes progress and follows the locally agreed syllabus. This meets the needs of all pupils, including those with special educational needs. At present, there is not enough time in Years 10 and 11 to ensure full and effective coverage of the course. This means that the provision does not comply with the requirements of the agreed syllabus. This was an issue at the time of the previous inspection that has not been resolved.
164. Religious education contributes very effectively to the college's provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils are provided with knowledge and insight into concepts of right and wrong and asked to apply them to the range of fundamental issues that confront them in real life. There is some study of other faiths, which teaches pupils to appreciate the diversity of those faiths.
165. Assessment is not satisfactory. There are still gaps in the provision of detailed assessment against the criteria of the locally agreed syllabus and target setting has not yet been satisfactorily established. There is insufficient use of ICT to support pupils' learning because of lack of access to equipment. When pupils do have access to ICT, they produce outstanding work, such as that in Year 9 on the Hajj, the results of which are on display on the walls of the religious education room. There are insufficient opportunities provided for pupils to visit places of worship of the range of religions that they study.
166. The department is well led and managed. It is managed efficiently by the head of department who has both a strong commitment to raising standards and a clear vision for the future development of the subject. Particularly good support is given to the other teachers who contribute to religious education teaching but who are not specialists and who are not based in the department. Time is not available to meet as a department to consider developments. This hampers developmental opportunities of the subject.
167. There has been satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection. There have been some significant improvements, particularly in establishing a broader programme of study of world religions in Years 7-9, together with a wider variety of teaching and learning methods, underpinned by detailed schemes of work. However, there is still the outstanding issue of the failure of the college to meet the requirements for religious education in Years 10 and 11 which impedes the growth and strength of the subject in the college's curriculum.

Drama

168. From limited observation, standards are broadly average. In work seen during the inspection, pupils in Years 7-9 are able to work together co-operatively, create a drama 'script' and perform it with reasonable skill. They develop awareness of audience and confidence in taking on a role. Standards in Years 10 and 11 are above average. Pupils are capable of a high standard of co-operative working through discussion, negotiation and taking on ideas from their teacher and each other. They show awareness of audience, ability to sustain a role, control of facial and body movement, and understand the body's reactions under the influence of different emotions. In the lesson observed they were, as a result, able to create 'sculptures' of ideas and emotions which were imaginative and thoughtful. Such standards are higher than observed at the previous inspection. This judgement reflects recent results in drama. In 2000, GCSE results were well above average with all pupils obtaining grades in the range A*-C.
169. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good. In a Year 7 lesson, pupils showed enthusiasm for drama activities and enjoyed the opportunity to perform from their own scripted piece. A pupil with special educational needs was similarly positive and confident enough in the group's support to read her part aloud. Trust in their teacher and each other was a feature of a Year 10 lesson, especially when taking part in group or paired activities, designed to develop control over physical expression and self-awareness. The quality of teaching is good. In a Year 7 lesson, the teacher provided appropriate warm-up activities and good feedback which helped pupils' work on developing a performance based on their own script. She encouraged evaluation

of their own and others' work so that they learned to develop a critical perspective. In a Year 10 lesson, the teacher had obviously developed very good relationships with her group so that co-operation with her and each other was very good. She gave plenty of practice in establishing the idea of 'physical theatre'. As a result, pupils were confident about using it in their 'devised piece' for coursework. She cultivated imagination, audience awareness, commitment and independent working, and as a result pupils achieved above average standards in the lesson.

170. On limited evidence, improvement since the previous inspection has been good. Drama continues to make a valuable contribution to the life and work of the college.