

INSPECTION REPORT

HEATHFIELD COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Cade Street
Old Heathfield
East Sussex
TN21 8RJ

LEA area: East Sussex

Unique reference number: 114587

Headteacher: Mr R Robinson

Reporting inspector: Mrs S Browning
1510

Dates of inspection: 30 October – 2 November 2000

Inspection number: 223872

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE COLLEGE

Type of college: Comprehensive

College category: Community

Age range of students: 11 to 18

Gender of students: Mixed

College address: Cade Street
Old Heathfield

Postcode: TN21 8RJ

Telephone number: 01435 866066

Fax number: 01435 867155

Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mrs P Clifford

Date of previous inspection: 22 May 1995

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		
Sheila Browning	(1510)	Registered inspector
John Edmond	(9472)	Lay inspector
John English	(15268)	Team inspector
Philip Winch	(11720)	Team inspector
Cynthia Millband	(5241)	Team inspector
Philip O'Neil	(3162)	Team inspector

The inspection contractor was:

Open Book Inspections
6 East Point
High Street, Seal
Sevenoaks
Kent
TN15 OEG

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The Office for Standards in Education
Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London WC2B 6SE

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE COLLEGE

With 1279 students, 627 boys and 652 girls, aged 11–18, Heathfield Community College is larger than the majority of secondary colleges. It is oversubscribed and has 186 more students than at the time of the last inspection. Attainment on entry to the college is average. The percentage of students identified as having special educational needs, at 18 per cent, is broadly in line with the national average. The percentage of students with Statements of Special Educational Need, at 1.3 per cent, is below average. The proportion of students receiving free college meals is below the national average. There are few students of ethnic minority origin and the percentage of students speaking English as an additional language, at 0.09 per cent, is very low. The college serves a wide catchment area and students come from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds.

HOW GOOD THE COLLEGE IS

Heathfield Community College is a very good college. Standards are high. It benefits from strong leadership that provides a clear educational direction with a staff who are committed to high standards and college improvement. High quality teaching ensures high standards of work, particularly at Key Stage 4. The college provides a stimulating and positive learning climate. The behaviour of students is very good. The college provides very good value for money. Its strengths far outweigh its weaknesses.

What the college does well

- Standards are high and they are well above the national average at the end of Key Stages 3 and 4. Standards are above the national average at A/AS level. Students at all levels of attainment achieve well.
- Students make good progress, and in Key Stage 4 they make very good progress. Teaching is good overall and is very good in Key Stage 4.
- The college provides a stimulating and positive learning ethos.
- Strong leadership provides a clear educational direction with a shared commitment to the improvement of existing high standards.
- The very good quality pastoral care contributes strongly to students' personal development, behaviour and academic success.

What could be improved

- There is a measure of underachievement amongst boys in comparison to girls.
- The college does not meet the requirement for provision for religious education at Key Stage 4 and does not meet the statutory requirement for a daily act of collective worship.

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

HOW THE COLLEGE HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The college has responded well to the issues raised in the last inspection in May 1995. GCSE results have increased at a faster rate than nationally. Standards at A/AS level have improved and the results in 1999 were the best ever recorded. Teaching is improved. The sixth form has developed considerably and provides a good range of academic courses. Extra-curricular provision is good. Provision for information and communication technology is greatly improved. Accommodation is significantly improved. The college continues to maintain a strong climate for learning. The clear sense of purpose contributes significantly to students' achievement. The gap between the attainment of boys and girls has narrowed, and good strategies are in place

which continue to address the differences in attainment. The teaching of literacy skills across the college is having a positive impact on learning and standards achieved. Appropriate provision for students of different attainments is greater, and good lesson planning and good teaching methods address their needs. Monitoring and evaluation of the college improvement plan are considerably strengthened. Standards of provision, the quality of learning and achievement are improved in non-examination physical education for Years 10 and 11. Legal requirements for religious education are met in the sixth form but not in Key Stage 4. The college has moved closer to complying with the requirement for a daily act of collective worship. The seriousness with which the college has responded to the issues and its established team approaches demonstrate a clear capacity and commitment to improve further.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	Compared with			
	all schools			Similar schools
	1997	1998	1999	1999
Key Stage 3 tests	B	A	A	B
GCSE examinations	A	A	A	A
A-levels/AS-levels	D	D	B	n/a

Key

well above average A

above average B

average C

below average D

well below average E

Over the past three years students' results in National Curriculum tests and at GCSE have been well above the national average; for A/AS level they have been close to national averages. There is a rising trend of improvement above the national average. In 1999, in Key Stage 3 students' performance in English, mathematics and science was well above national averages and better than the averages for similar schools when measured by the percentage of students eligible for free school meals and those with special educational needs. At the end of Key Stage 3 boys do not progress at the same fast rate as girls. The good standards achieved in examinations and tests were reflected in the good standards seen in lessons during the inspection.

College results for the year 2000 are improved for mathematics, are similar for science and show a slight decline for English. In 1999 the proportion of students, 60 per cent, obtaining at least 5 A*-C grades at GCSE was well above the national average with particularly strong results in mathematics, combined science, art and design, design and technology, drama, geography, and physical education. GNVQ results are good in the Sixth Form. GCE A/AS level results have improved to above the national average over the last three years. Particularly good A/AS level results were achieved in biology, chemistry, drama and art. Students aged 14 and 16 achieve standards better than others in similar schools. Results demonstrate the good progress students make; girls generally outperform boys at GCSE and at A/AS level. The college has agreed challenging targets with the local education authority and has successfully met them.

STUDENTS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the college	Very good. Students respond very well to the expectation that they will work hard. They are good listeners, maintain concentration and work productively.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Students show respect for each other and for property. Relationships with staff and among students are very good.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Students have well-developed personal and social skills; they are mature and have a sense of responsibility.
Attendance	Satisfactory. Attendance is in line with the national average and unauthorised absence is broadly in line with the national average.

Students' attitudes to learning are a positive contributory factor to the standards achieved. The majority behave in a mature and responsible way. The personal development of students and relationships are very good. Attendance is satisfactory.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

The standard of teaching is a major strength of the college. Teaching is good or better in 84 per cent of lessons, of which 47 per cent are very good or excellent. The remainder are at least satisfactory. More instances of very good teaching are seen in Key Stage 4. In almost all curriculum areas teaching is effective and on occasions it is outstanding. Teaching and support of students with special educational needs (SEN) are good. There are good opportunities to extend higher-attaining pupils. Overall, teaching is very good or better in English; it is good or better in mathematics and science. Students respond well to high quality teaching and expectations. Lessons are well planned and learning objectives are shared and consolidated with students. Teachers encourage students to concentrate hard and work productively. As a result, the quality of learning is good and often very good. Students are eager to learn, to increase their knowledge, skills and understanding and readily participate in lessons. They are clear about what they must do to achieve higher standards. Teachers encourage students to work together and evaluate their own and each other's work.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE COLLEGE

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. All subjects of the National Curriculum are appropriately included. Literacy skills are taught effectively, but numeracy skills across the curriculum are insufficiently developed. Extra-curricular provision is good. Inclusion of students is good. The time allowed for religious education at Key Stage 4 is insufficient to cover the agreed syllabus.
Provision for students with special educational needs	Good. Students are fully integrated in the college community, they are confident and achieve well. In 2000, over 95 per cent of students with special needs obtained five GCSEs grades A*-G, with 35 per cent obtaining five grades A*-C.
Provision for students' personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Teaching, curriculum and extra-curricular activities make a good contribution to the moral and cultural development of students'. Provision for their social development is very good. Opportunities for spiritual development, although satisfactory, are less evident in religious education and assemblies than elsewhere.
How well the college cares for its students	This is a strength. Students feel secure and well supported. Provision for the care and support of students makes a strong contribution to their development; they are well known by tutors and heads of year. Students are involved in their own target setting.

The curriculum is good, although there is non-compliance in provision for religious education at Key Stage 4. Provision in the sixth form is good. Extra-curricular provision is wide ranging. Provision for students' personal, social and health education is very good. Parents think highly of the college, and the partnership promotes the education of students very effectively.

HOW WELL THE COLLEGE IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. The headteacher, senior managers and governors work closely and effectively together to ensure a clear educational direction and set clear objectives for the college. Teachers work well as a team. A strong culture of accountability and self-evaluation of the performance of the college exists. Educational and financial planning are very good.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors are committed and are very well informed. With the exception of the daily act of collective worship and religious education at Key Stage 4 they fulfil the statutory requirements. They are effectively involved in policy making, budgetary and educational planning and decisions. Arrangements for financial control and management and cost effectiveness are very good.

The college's evaluation of its performance	A strong feature that has improved significantly since the last inspection. Systems of evaluation are established and continue to be refined. Individual students and teachers and curriculum departments are all involved.
The strategic use of resources	Cost effectiveness is a strong feature. Teaching staff are well deployed, and administrative, technical and educational support is very good. Resources are very well used.

The college has particular strengths in the performing arts. Taking into account the high standards achieved and the high quality of education against the income per student, the college gives very good value for money.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE COLLEGE

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • College's expectation of hard work. • College is easily approachable. • Students like college. • Quality of teaching and the progress made by pupils. • College helps students to become mature and responsible. • College is well led and managed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homework arrangements. • Information about pupils' progress. • The range of after-college activities. • College's links with parents.

Almost all parents are pleased with the college and the quality of provision. Inspectors agree with this positive view. A minority of parents are dissatisfied with homework arrangements. Homework contributes positively to learning. It is set and marked regularly and is of a suitable content. Some parents would like more information about the progress their children make but information sent to parents is quite comprehensive. The range of after-college activities is extensive. A few parents would like the college to work more closely with parents, but generally the college has effective links with parents.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE COLLEGE DOES WELL

Standards are high and are well above the national average at the end of Key Stages 3 and 4. Standards are above the national average at A/AS level. Students at all levels of attainment achieve well.

1. The standards achieved by students at the college are high, and are well above national averages both in the national tests for 14-year-olds and in GCSE examinations.
2. In the national tests for 14-year-olds, results have been consistently above or well above national averages in English, mathematics and science for the last three years. Mathematics and science results improved slightly in 1999 when using the average National Curriculum points by subject and gender. English results dipped slightly for the same year, and fluctuate year on year for no explainable reason, whilst teacher assessments remain constant. Mathematics results were slightly better than results in English and science. Boys have maintained a high performance over this time, but girls' results have improved at a faster rate in these three subjects. The combined national test results at 14 are better than the average for similar schools. In mathematics, they are well above average. College results for the year 2000 are improved for mathematics, are similar for science and show a slight decline for English. At this stage of the term only provisional national statistics are available.
3. GCSE examination results have shown a steady improvement since 1995, and the combined results for boys and girls have been well above the national average for grades A*-C and grades A*-G over the three years to 1999. Results for 1999 show that 60 per cent of the year group achieved five or more higher grades; 63 per cent of individual results were A*-C. Standards in subjects are mostly consistent, with some slight fluctuation from year to year. The 1999 results in mathematics, combined science, design and technology, geography, and physical education were significantly above national averages. Outstanding results were achieved in art and design and drama. Although still above the national average, students performed less well in English language, French and history than in other subjects. When comparing GCSE five or more grades A*-G or GNVQ equivalent passes, the college results are above those of similar schools. Students' progress at GCSE, based on the average point score per student, was well above average in comparison with similar schools. At GCSE, boys did better than girls in physical education and music and about the same as the girls in geography, mathematics and German. In all other subjects the girls clearly did better than the boys. Twenty-one students followed the diploma course in vocational studies in 1999 and 71 per cent successfully completed the course.
4. In 2000, the college returned its best ever set of GCSE results, and English literature, business studies, history, food technology, information and communication technology, and physical education all achieved their best scores. In the 2000 college results 98 per cent of the year group successfully achieved GCSE's. The overall college results for 2000 for five or more GCSE grades A*-C or GNVQ equivalent passes, at 66 per cent, and for A*-G at 97 per cent, respectively show an upward trend. The average point score per student also indicates improvement. Fourteen students followed the course in vocational studies and 64 per cent successfully completed the diploma course.

5. The college is particularly successful in the number of students with special educational needs who achieve five or more grades A*-G or GNVQ equivalent passes. In the 2000 GCSE results, 39 per cent of students on stages 2 to 5 of the special needs register achieved five or more A*-C passes and 87 per cent achieved five A*-G grades. Of the students on stages 1 to 5, 35 per cent achieved five or more A*-C grades and 95 per cent achieved five A*-G grades.
6. In the sixth form, GCE A/AS-level results have improved to above the national average over the last three years. The average A/AS point score of candidates entered for two or more GCE A-levels or AS equivalent was above the national average. In the 1999 A/AS-level results, over 48 per cent of all grades were A/B and the pass rate was 91.6 per cent. Twelve students achieved at least two 'A' grades and a record number of students achieved the highest grades. The trend of improvement over the last three years has been close to the national trend at A/AS-level. Results have been particularly good in biology, chemistry, art and drama. Results for A/AS-level mathematics, physics, and information and communication technology were not as good in comparison, although to some extent this reflected the ability of the students taking these subjects. At A/AS-level, the pass rate is consistently in the region of 90 per cent or better. Overall college results for the year 2000 show an upward trend at all levels. A college value-added analysis of the GCE A/AS-level examination results indicates that 59 students performed better than expected and 27 performed below their expected targets. Of these the average value added score per student was 2.33. Girls generally outperform boys at GCSE and at A/AS-level. The college has agreed challenging targets with the local education authority and has met them.
7. The standard of work seen in lessons during the inspection was also often above average. The work seen at this time of the college year indicates that the older students in Key Stage 3 are set to improve by the end of the year to reach standards that are above the national average. Standards are equally high in the majority of subjects, although students are not generally achieving as well in religious education in comparison with the rest. The standard of work seen during the inspection was also often above average, reflecting the good results and demonstrating the good progress pupils make at both Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form.
8. Boys and girls respond equally and sufficiently both orally and in written responses in class. They are keen to participate and present their ideas. Work sampling indicates that boys' work is at times not as well presented, appears to be rushed and is inclined to have more errors. The progress of boys is variable and boys do not do as well as girls. Girls continue to outperform boys in all key stages. The National Foundation for Education Research (NFER) Cognitive Ability Test (CAT) scores indicates that usually the college admits a comprehensive intake of students of all abilities. However, the outcomes of verbal ability test scores show that boys do not perform as well as girls; there is also some evidence of 'creaming off' of higher attaining boys outside of the catchment area. This partly explains the differences in performance. The college's emphasis on promoting high achievement amongst boys is having a positive impact. A tangible outcome of this focus is that the gap between the attainment of boys and girls is narrowing.
9. Assessment data is increasingly being used to measure the performance of departments and individual teachers. Identifiable weaknesses are targeted in line with local education authority procedures. The college's 2000 results show all departments performing at least satisfactorily and most departments achieving very good results.

10. Students' literacy skills are high. Teaching consolidates literacy skills through suitably challenging tasks. A framework of key skills has been identified which builds upon the work in Key Stage 2 and facilitates progression. Literacy is an explicit part of the teaching in the college. Students read fluently and are adept at getting information from text in lessons and from other sources of information. In a Year 11 art lesson, the standard of research in students' sketch books, whilst exploring art from different cultures, was wide ranging and of high quality. In a Year 13 art lesson, students researched influential western artists such as Van Gogh, Delauney, Stanley Spencer and Georgia O'Keefe, and showed good breadth and understanding.
11. Most students are capable users of the Internet. In a Year 10 geography lesson, students understood how variations in rainfall could cause a flood hazard in different parts of the world. Using the Internet in pairs, they collated information to compare and contrast facts and prepared a good quality Powerpoint presentation. Towards the end of the lesson they critically reviewed their presentations. Students speak clearly and confidently, often using subject specific terminology accurately, and are good listeners. There is a wide understanding of scientific vocabulary through the regular use of technical language. In a Year 7 design and technology lessons, students used the word 'ergonomics' when discussing how to create a half front side view of Lazy Susan tongs. In a Year 9 history lesson, students explored the issues arising from the First World War; they aptly and confidently described with insight what propaganda was, its purpose and impact on the recruitment of soldiers.
12. Students' numeracy skills across the curriculum are developing appropriately in line with inspectors' expectations. A few good examples were seen in music when students explored notes, from different cultures 'Javanese' and 'Balinese' and played the notes counting the beats and clapping the rhythms with increasing accuracy. In geography, Year 7 students used Ordnance Survey maps of the local area to measure and estimate distances between local features. In a chemistry lesson, Year 13 students showed good use of information technology to successfully record an electric field graphically and interpreted the results and made comparisons between the data.

Students make good progress, and in Key Stage 4 they make very good progress. Teaching is good and is very good in Key Stage 4.

13. The high quality of teaching is a key factor in the high standards achieved. Teachers have high but realistic expectations of what students are capable of achieving. In a Year 11 design and technology lesson focused on designing and making, the expert knowledge and understanding of what was needed to achieve the very highest standard possible was shared with pupils, and the quality of their coursework consequently improved. Teachers share learning objectives and consolidate them throughout lessons. Another strength of teaching is the skilful use of questioning to promote and consolidate learning. In a Year 9 science lesson, for example, the good questioning drew out important ideas about microbes from the students. Teachers have a good and secure knowledge and understanding of their subjects. They enable students to acquire knowledge, skills and understanding progressively and at the same time extend their enquiry skills. Good examples of this were seen in geography and psychology A-level coursework. Generally, teachers cater well for the learning of students of different abilities and interests. In lessons, teachers and learning support assistants successfully support students with special educational needs. Higher-attaining students are generally challenged appropriately and are given more demanding work. Teachers encourage interest and further research in subjects.

14. Lesson planning is effective, often detailed and comprehensive, with tasks and activities carefully selected to extend understanding and ensure students' participation. In a Year 9 English lesson introducing similes and metaphors and exploring sound whilst sucking a sherbet lemon, the teacher provided a progressively challenging and a stimulating range of language activities. In a Year 11 French lesson, many varied activities were introduced, listening, speaking, reading reference material, writing sentences, then good use of tape to assess how well the students had learnt in the lesson. In a Year 9 science lesson, the learning was ably handed over to the students and, at the same time, important new facts were learnt about the reasons for inoculation. Time and resources are generally used well, and teachers are well organised. In a Year 13 communication studies lesson, excellent use was made of a short video film clip to stimulate discussion and use of specific language. As a result, students could explain clearly how Sharron and Weaver models help in the analysis of video clips. In the majority of lessons, teachers sum up well what has been covered and what students have learned during the lesson. Oral evaluations are very good in English, drama, modern foreign languages and art, consistent with the very clear whole-college policy. An excellent example was seen in a Year 13 drama lesson, preparing for a paper on Berkoff. The teacher made excellent use of the course assessment criteria and shared this with students who in turn were able to assess their rehearsals and use of drama strategies and made some very good peer evaluations about performance. In a Year 11 design and technology lesson, excellent use was made of constructive criticism, enabling students to achieve at a higher level in coursework. The assessment of progress is less consistent: it is not always as strong and effective in mathematics and science.
15. Students make good and often very good progress in their learning. They are eager to provide opinions, answer questions and participate. However, in a Year 9 religious education lesson students explored the noble truths of Buddhism through watching a video. They were keen to provide ideas and suggestions but were not encouraged to be involved in discussion and as a result became uninterested. Students acquire new skills and have a good understanding of what they have learned and what they need to do to improve the quality of their work. Students' intellectual, physical and creative efforts are very good. They develop their understanding due to the interesting and challenging work set. Students are clear about what they have to do and concentrate well. They work well together and the college's good inclusion practices enable students to integrate well.
16. Students use practical skills well. In Year 11 design and technology coursework there is evidence of exceptional and significant gains made in the understanding and application of the design process. In a Year 10 dance lesson, students developed their own technical skills based on a study of Christopher Druce's Ghost dances. They created and performed a good sequence using complex movement patterns and used choreographic principles to good effect. In a Year 10 basketball lesson, students extended and refined their skills and developed good tactical awareness. Students are very keen to improve and refine skills. Students work well independently and together. They are encouraged to evaluate each other's work and their own, and have the skills to do this effectively. Tasks are carefully chosen to match students' needs, sometimes with built-in support, extension tasks or materials.
17. Learning support assistants are very effective in maintaining the pace of learning among students with special educational needs. Students with special educational needs make good progress in line with their prior attainment. A good example was seen in a Year 11 drama lesson based on 'The Roses of Eyam', when students with special educational needs were very focused, and really entered the role and gave a good performance. In a Year 8 English withdrawal lesson, students with special educational needs were well supported when linking syllables to make words such as athlete, complete and severe.

The teacher had excellent knowledge of phonics and of strategies to promote spelling. Although articulate the students used a limited vocabulary. By using word games the teacher made learning fun.

18. Students of higher attainment are usually effectively and suitably challenged, although not always consistently so in science, particularly at Key Stage 3. In a science lesson about chemical changes, the work set for Year 7 higher-attaining students was insufficiently challenging and could be done by the majority of the class. The sampling of students' work in science also indicates that teachers' expectations are too low for higher-attaining students and that there are missed opportunities to develop investigative procedures when undertaking class experiments. At Key Stage 4 students are given more opportunities than at Key Stage 3 to work through and improve their formal coursework for their examination.

The college provides a stimulating and positive learning ethos.

19. The college promotes a positive atmosphere and a clear sense of order and purpose. A well-established culture of college improvement, accountability and self-critical evaluation exists. Regular monitoring and self-evaluation effectively contribute to college improvements. These practices help the college to identify successful strategies for teaching and learning and raising student attainment. Evaluations are systematic and include the close analysis of performance data and outcomes at all stages, lesson observations and the scrutiny of students' work. The results are shared within departments, across the college and with governors in order to develop action points for improvement. The college has a well-developed self-analytical process, it celebrates its successes and addresses its weaknesses. Good examples of recent initiatives include the focus on the under-performance of boys, and the emphasis on good quality teaching and learning as a core activity in raising attainment.
20. Senior managers are given responsibility for major targeted areas in the college and this work is evaluated. Clear and high expectations have been set regarding the work of senior managers; their work in curriculum support is beginning to ensure a consistent whole-college approach. Senior managers have line management responsibilities for the work of heads of department. All departments participate well in target setting. They address the whole college targets in their own departmental plans. Plans are monitored effectively and regularly by senior managers and governors throughout the year. Target setting is part of the established culture in relation to analysing and predicting the achievements of students. The college is linking this with the monitoring of students' work and performance and involves the students themselves in individual target setting. In the light of national and local targets, these practices are systematically developed. Curriculum areas and working parties have identified key and clear issues concerning teaching and learning and have identified good teaching practices, which now form the basis of the teaching and learning policy. These practices are having a positive impact. The college has identified successful teaching elements to facilitate effective and progressive learning. There are also enrichment activities such as master classes, booster classes and a boys' English class to address specific issues of attainment.
21. The sharing of good practice within departments and between departments is a regular focus at head of department meetings. The breadth of teaching styles enables students of all abilities to be successful, and students work hard to the best of their ability. Teaching and learning, achievements, attitudes and the well-being of each individual, including raising standards of attainment for the lowest achievers, are addressed successfully. Each year a small number of disaffected students fail to achieve their potential and this is another priority receiving attention in the college plans for improvement.

Strong leadership provides a clear educational direction with a shared commitment to the improvement of existing high standards.

22. Leadership provided by the headteacher, senior managers and governors is strong and very good. The headteacher has a clear vision of what the college should achieve. Governors, senior managers and teachers share this vision. This and the high commitment of staff encourage students to work hard and achieve their potential. Teachers have a secure knowledge of their subjects and use successful teaching methods. Teachers have high expectations of what students can achieve.
23. The college is successful in its aims. The high standards achieved, the good quality provision, the good teaching and learning all reflect this success. A consultative approach encourages staff, students and parents to express their views, although decision making is clearly the responsibility of management. The response to the issues raised in the last inspection report and an emphasis on improved standards of teaching and learning are positive. Improvement is supported by the delegation of management. Staff are encouraged to take responsibility for their own curriculum areas and their professional development. Leadership is also focused on evaluation and review so that all practices are subject to professional scrutiny.
24. The governing body has established systematic procedures for gathering information about the provision made in all areas of the college and assuring its quality. Effective committees monitor the work of the college well. Governors work very closely with senior managers on committees and are increasingly well informed. They are fully aware of the strengths of the college and where further work is required. This enables them to make informed judgement and pertinent decisions concerning college development and budgetary decisions. The very good management of the headteacher and his high expectations and sensitivity to colleagues provide a very good role model of leadership. The targets in the college's improvement plan are challenging, appropriate yet attainable. The college is successful in meeting its targets. The college is not complacent and looks towards further improvement.

The very good quality pastoral care contributes strongly to students' personal development, behaviour and academic success.

25. The college has a strong pastoral system which supports students' personal development, behaviour and academic success. The college is well organised and on entry to the college students benefit from good transfer arrangements from their primary schools. The composition of tutor and teaching groups is undertaken carefully. The college works very closely with its cluster primary schools. Very quickly students are known individually to their tutors and heads of year. The good quality personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme links in with the tutorial work undertaken by all students throughout the college.
26. Heads of year collaborate closely on tracking students' choices and counselling. The very good pastoral care, PSHE and careers guidance contribute in helping students to develop thinking skills, confidence, self esteem and improved personal relationships. The effectiveness of these procedures is assessed through attendance figures and students' behaviour. The college carefully uses and acts upon the data and information collated about the number and nature of exclusions, number of students failing to complete GCSE courses and the general behaviour of the students. The college has focused on developing arrangements to support students better and make them more aware of their strengths and weaknesses and standards of attainment. Students in Years 10 and 11 summarise their achievements using the National Record of Achievement. The use of the new

achievement award booklet across the college reinforces and encourages students to collate and celebrate their achievements. Good progress has been made in developing manageable systems using assessment information to provide individual educational student profiles and targets.

27. In Key Stage 4, students are given extensive, informed and impartial guidance on post-16 progression. Social inclusion is a priority and the college is taking effective action to enable all students to benefit from the provision it offers. Careers education and guidance form a substantial part of the PSHE programme and throughout the college.
28. In the sixth form, general studies, key skills, PSHE and community service are all core activities. Students address issues of equal opportunities through structured PSHE lessons. They are given detailed advice and guidance on post-18 opportunities including employment. Visits are made to universities and a residential course is held at a local university. Nearly all of the A/AS-level students progress on to universities, including Oxford and Cambridge.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

There is a measure of underachievement amongst some boys in comparison to the high achievement of girls.

29. Boys have maintained a high performance over time at Key Stage 3, but girls' results have improved at a faster rate in the three core subjects of English, mathematics and science. Girls continue to outperform boys in all key stages. The NFER CAT scores on entry to the college indicate that usually it admits a comprehensive intake of students of all abilities. However, the outcomes of verbal ability test scores show that boys do not perform as well as girls, and this also reinforces the college's concern about the lower literacy levels amongst some boys. In the 1999 GCSEs in English language boys did not perform as well as girls. In science, at GCSE the students who under-performed were spread throughout the sets, and an analysis of the sets demonstrates that a disproportionate number were low-achieving boys. In technology at GCSE the systems group, largely made up of higher-attaining boys, under performed. This partly explains the observed overall differences in performance. At GCSE in 1999, the ability profile of the year group showed boys' literacy abilities as significantly lower than girls', another factor that helps to explain some of the differences in performance. The college's emphasis on promoting high achievement amongst boys is beginning to have a positive impact. The performance of particular sets and teachers is scrutinised at all levels. A tangible outcome of this focus is that the gap between the attainment of boys and girls is narrowing. Another strategy employed is an all boys set in English. This class was observed studying Henry V Act IV, using information and communication technology. The teacher matched the work well and although students said they found the work hard and their spellings were not entirely accurate, they were interested and showed good knowledge of the play. They were able to search the text and select quotations reflecting the characters' views of this act.
30. Boys and girls respond equally and sufficiently, both orally and in written responses, in class. They are keen to participate and present their ideas. The sampling of students' work indicates that boys' work is often less well presented; it appears to be rushed and is inclined to have more errors. The progress of boys is variable although the gap in comparison to progress made by girls is narrowing.
31. At GCSE, the results of the ablest boys and girls are very similar. The results for A/AS-levels show that girls do better than boys at age 18. Students on vocational courses attain equally well.

The college does not meet the requirement for provision for religious education at Key Stage 4 and does not meet the statutory requirement for a daily act of collective worship.

32. The provision for religious education at Key Stage 4 does not meet requirements. Although the PSHE programme contributes to religious education, the amount of time given is inadequate and below that recommended. The time allocated does not allow sufficient time to cover the programmes of study in the locally agreed syllabus. The frequency of lessons is also disjointed, with one lesson every two weeks, and this does too little to build on previous work and learning in religious education.
33. The college has insufficient large community spaces to meet together as a whole for a daily assembly. Although not yet meeting fully the statutory requirement for a daily act of collective worship, the college is moving closer to compliance. Year groups have assemblies but not on a daily basis. On days when an assembly is not held, students are in tutor groups but do not always have an act of worship. Assemblies are orderly and there is a sense of occasion. Those observed contained an element of worship and time for reflection.

WHAT SHOULD THE COLLEGE DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

34. The college should now:

- (1) Improve the attainment of boys by:
- promoting the whole college literacy strategy and raising boys' literacy standards;
 - addressing more urgently the under-performance issues highlighted in department action plans;
 - developing a whole-college approach to improve boys' motivation and standards of achievement.
- (Paragraphs 29 - 31)

- (2) Ensure that the college complies with:
- the entitlement for all students at Key Stage 4 to religious education;
 - the requirement for a daily act of collective worship for all students.
(Paragraphs 32, 33)

PART C: COLLEGE DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	70
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and students	34

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
13	34	37	16	0	0	0

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

Information about the college's students

Students on the college's roll	Y7– Y11	Sixth form
Number of students on the college's roll	1083	196
Number of full-time students eligible for free college meals	74	1

Special educational needs	Y7– Y11	Sixth form
Number of students with statements of special educational needs	21	1
Number of students on the college's special educational needs register	226	7

English as an additional language	No of students
Number of students with English as an additional language	11

Student mobility in the last college year	No of students
Students who joined the college other than at the usual time of first admission	21
Students who left the college other than at the usual time of leaving	37

Attendance

Authorised absence	%
College data	8.0
National comparative data	7.9

Unauthorised absence	%
College data	0.6
National comparative data	1.1

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

Number of registered students in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	99 (98)	96 (97)	96 (94)	192 (191)

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	63 (71)	72 (72)	76 (70)
	Girls	86 (92)	70 (74)	67 (70)
	Total	149 (163)	142 (146)	143 (140)
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	College	78 (82)	74 (78)	74 (70)
	National	63 (65)	62(60)	55 (56)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	College	43 (61)	51 (53)	35 (36)
	National	28 (35)	38 (36)	23 (27)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	60 (59)	82 (72)	78 (75)
	Girls	74 (89)	85 (79)	75 (86)
	Total	134 (148)	167 (151)	153 (161)
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	College	69 (74)	87 (76)	81 (81)
	National	64 (62)	64 (64)	60 (62)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	College	35 (37)	55 (37)	54 (49)
	National	31 (31)	37 (37)	28 (31)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	99 (98)	86 (76)	108 (118)	194 (194)

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of students achieving the standard specified	Boys	41 (58)	81 (94)	82 (98)
	Girls	76 (70)	107 (95)	107 (98)
	Total	117 (128)	188 (189)	189 (196)
Percentage of students achieving the standard specified	College	60 (64)	97 (94)	97 (99)
	National	47 (46)	90 (88)	96 (93)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per student	College	46 (45)
	National	38 (37)

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

Attainment at the end of the sixth form

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	54 (37)	66 (49)	120 (86)

Average A/AS points score per candidate	For candidates entered for 2 or more A-levels or equivalent			For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A-levels or equivalent		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
College	15.8 (12.1)	19.9 (17.4)	17.9 (15.3)	2.6 (3.0)	3.0 (3.6)	2.8 (3.3)
National	17.7	18.1	17.9	2.7	2.8	2.8

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

Vocational qualifications	Number	% success rate
Number in their final year of studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those students who achieved all those they studied	College	13 (21) 62 (71)
	National	n/a n/a

Ethnic background of students

	No of students
Black – Caribbean heritage	0.0
Black – African heritage	0.0
Black – other	0.0
Indian	0.0
Pakistani	0.0
Bangladeshi	0.5
Chinese	0.1
White	99.4
Any other minority ethnic group	0.0

Exclusions in the last college year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	18	2
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	78.7
Number of students per qualified teacher	16.3:1

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7– Y13

Total number of education support staff	19.0
Total aggregate hours worked per week	523

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13]

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	75.1
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Average teaching group size: Y7– Y13

Key Stage 3	24.5
Key Stage 4	18.0
Sixth Form	12.7

Financial information

Financial year	1999
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	£
Total income	3100257
Total expenditure	3030139
Expenditure per student	2617
Balance brought forward from previous year	131901
Balance carried forward to next year	202019

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1279
Number of questionnaires returned	469

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes college.	35	55	5	3	2
My child is making good progress in college.	35	52	5	1	7
Behaviour in the college is good.	23	57	8	3	9
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	21	61	12	3	3
The teaching is good.	24	63	4	1	9
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	25	52	12	3	8
I would feel comfortable about approaching the college with questions or a problem.	49	43	4	2	3
The college expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	55	40	2	0	3
The college works closely with parents.	27	53	11	3	6
The college is well led and managed.	41	45	3	2	9
The college is helping my child become mature and responsible.	33	54	5	1	6
The college provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	27	47	10	2	14