

INSPECTION REPORT

Birley Community College

Sheffield

LEA area: Sheffield

Unique reference number: 107146

Headteacher: Mr A Vicars

Reporting inspector: Susan Chamberlain
7661

Dates of inspection: 10th – 13th February 2003

Inspection number: 249129

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

© Crown copyright 2003

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that all extracts quoted are reproduced verbatim without adaptation and on condition that the source and date thereof are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the college. Under the College Inspections Act 1996, the college must provide a copy of this report and/or its summary free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE COLLEGE

Type of college:	Comprehensive
College category:	Community
Age range of students:	11 to 16
Gender of students:	Mixed
College address:	Thornbridge Avenue Birley Sheffield
Postcode:	S12 3AB
Telephone number:	0114 2392531
Fax number:	0114 2655034
Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Dr A M F Brook
Date of previous inspection:	21 st April 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
7661	Susan Chamberlain	Registered inspector	ICT	Information about the college The college's results and students achievements How well is the college led and managed? What should the college do to improve further?
9002	Derek Ashton	Lay inspector		Students' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the college care for its students? How well does the college work in partnership with parents
18950	Carmen Rodney	Team inspector	English, Drama	
31100	Geoff Hunter	Team inspector	Mathematics	
	Ken McKenzie	Team inspector	Support ICT	
21963	Terry Chipp	Team inspector	Art	
31963	Malcolm Padmore	Team inspector	Design and Technology	
20497	Vernon Williams	Team inspector	Geography	The curriculum
15304	Reg Fletcher	Team inspector	History/Citizenship	
4749	Martin Ash	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
30128	Shirley Stanley	Team inspector	Music	
14446	Barry Simmons	Team inspector	Physical Education	
16890	Maureen Potter	Team inspector	Religious education	How well are pupils taught?
12762	Roger Catchpole	Team inspector	Science	
2746	Roy Lund	Team inspector		Special educational needs

The inspection contractor was:

Penta International
Upperton House
The Avenue
Eastbourne
BN21 3YB

Any concerns or complaints about the inspection or the report should be raised with the inspection contractor. Complaints that are not satisfactorily resolved by the contractor should be raised with OFSTED by writing to:

The Complaints Manager
Inspection Quality Division
The Office for Standards in Education
Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London WC2B 6SE

REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	7
Information about the college	
How good the college is	
What the college does well	
What could be improved	
How the college has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Students' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the college	
How well the college is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the college	
PART B: COMMENTARY	
HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?	11
The college's results and students' achievements	
Students' attitudes, values and personal development	
HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?	13
HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO STUDENTS?	15
HOW WELL DOES THE COLLEGE CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?	20
HOW WELL DOES THE COLLEGE WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS	22
HOW WELL IS THE COLLEGE LED AND MANAGED?	22
WHAT SHOULD THE COLLEGE DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?	24
OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES	24
PART C: COLLEGE DATA AND INDICATORS	27
PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES	32

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE COLLEGE

Birley is a larger than average Community College with 1180 students aged 11 to 16 years. The college has only 4 students (0.3 per cent) for whom English is an additional language. It has 163 students (14 per cent, average) who are eligible for free school meals. There are 251 students (21 per cent) with special educational needs and of these 6 (0.5 per cent) have statements. The college has specialist technology status. It takes students across the spectrum of ability but overall, the attainment on entry of students is below average. However, the attainment of students in the current Year 7 is higher and is close to average. The college is involved in projects instigated by the Excellence in Cities initiative, for example, the use of learning mentors and the excellence challenge.

HOW GOOD THE COLLEGE IS

This is a good college with a number of very good features. It is very well led by the headteacher and is increasingly offering its students a high quality of education. Teaching and learning are good. The curriculum is innovative and varied. It provides relevant pathways of study for students across the attainment range. The college provides very good care for its students and, overall, the college provides good value for money.

What the college does well

- The excellent curriculum in Years 10 and 11, particularly the introduction of the Pathways Structure
- The college's very good systems of care
- Excellent leadership by the headteacher and key staff
- Good teaching
- Very good relationships
- Very good provision for students' personal, social and health education

What could be improved

- The timing and continuity of subjects in the expressive arts faculty, especially music.
- Standards of writing and speaking at length
- The contribution to the teaching of numeracy by all teachers
- Consistent use of assessment procedures across the college and the analysis by gender of resulting data
- The continued focus on the behaviour of a small but significant group of students

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 made good improvement since the previous inspection in 1997. Teaching has improved. However, standards of attainment have dipped slightly but show signs of pulling back in 2002. Attendance levels have improved. The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 has been extended to ensure that a better match be made to the needs of the students. There has been no improvement in the provision of music. The school has become a community college and has gained technology status.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved at the end of Year 11 based on average point scores in GCSE examinations.

Performance in:	Compared with			
	all colleges			similar colleges
	2000	2001	2002	2002
GCSE examinations	C	D	D	C

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

Students enter the college with levels of attainment below average, overall. By the end of Year 9, standards, in 2002, were below average in English and average in mathematics and science and average overall. When compared with colleges of a similar context, attainment is below average in English and above average in mathematics and science. Overall, as in the last three years, it is average. The trend in National Curriculum point scores is below average. Standards seen in the inspection were in line with national expectations, students making good progress and achieving well. In English work seen was below average and in mathematics and science it was average.

In 2002, GCSE results were below average for 5 A* to C and for 5 A* to G grades. For 1 A* to G grades they were well below average. The varied curriculum has meant that some students have not taken GCSE examinations. When compared with students' prior attainment and when compared with colleges of a similar context grades were average for 5 A* to C and 5 A* to G and well below average for 1 A* to G grades. Overall, they were as expected. Standards, at this level, seen in the inspection were average and students' achievements good. Standards in English were below average and average in mathematics and science.

The trend in the college's average GCSE/GNVQ point scores is below average. The college targets are sensible and reflect the prior attainment of students in the current Years 9 and 11. Students with English as an additional language and those with learning difficulties make good progress.

STUDENTS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the college	Good. Overall, students have positive attitudes and are eager to learn. They are very involved in extra-curricular activities and show a strong commitment to the college council.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Behaviour is good. A small, minority of students misbehave and normally, this is dealt with promptly and effectively
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Students' relationships with each other and with teachers are very good as is their personal development. They have a good rapport with their tutors.
Attendance	Attendance is close to satisfactory , having improved since the last inspection. Unauthorised absence is still above the national average.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of students:	Years 7 – 9	Years 10 – 11
Quality of teaching	Good	Good

Teaching and learning are good, overall. In over three-quarters of lessons, teaching was found to be at least good and in approximately a third of lessons, it was very good or excellent. Learning mirrors these proportions. A very small number of lessons were unsatisfactory.

In a high proportion of good and very good lessons there is good planning, an interesting use of activities and good management of students. Teachers use positive feedback, rewards and praise to motivate them. They have high expectations, give good explanations and establish positive relationships and in response students work hard, learn well and develop improved self esteem. This is particularly true in English, art, modern foreign language, information and communication technology, science, physical education and religious education. In a small minority of lessons, basic classroom control is not fully established and learning is unsatisfactory. Overall, however, learning is mostly good. Not all teachers contribute effectively to the teaching of literacy and numeracy. The college tries hard to cater for the needs of all its students.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE COLLEGE

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Excellent in Years 10 and 11 and very good overall. The curriculum provides flexible, varied and relevant programmes of study and matches the interest, aptitudes and special needs of students well. The extra-curricular and careers and vocational educational opportunities are good. Links with the community and partnerships are very good. The college does not have a daily collective act of worship. Statutory requirements are not met in music in Years 7 to 9.
Provision for students with special educational needs	Good. The college provides good, support to all students with learning difficulties that enables them to make good progress over time. The co-ordinator offers very good support to students and colleagues.
Provision for students with English as an additional language	Good. The few students with English as an additional language (EAL) are well cared for within the college's guidance and support procedures.
Provision for students' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good. Provision for spiritual, moral and social development is good and for cultural development is satisfactory. A clear set of values and expectations creates a firm basis for students to learn right from wrong and build good relationships. There is wide scope for students to engage in social and cultural activities in college and in the community. The multicultural dimension relating to aspects within the local community is less well developed.
How well the college cares for its students	Very good. The college provides very good care for all its students whatever their circumstances. The quality and quantity of support and guidance, including transition arrangements, are well developed. The college provides a very good system for disaffected students in the I-Zone where they are assessed, worked with and re-integrated back into mainstream classes. It forms a very positive response to the needs of students who might otherwise be excluded from college. Good procedures are in place for assessment in some departments, however,

	this is not consistent across the college and data is not always analysed by gender.
--	--

HOW WELL THE COLLEGE IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Leadership is excellent. The headteacher and senior leadership group have a clear vision for the college which is being realised day on day. Much has been achieved. Management is very good including that of middle managers.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very good. The Chair of Governors is very strong and has a clear understanding of the college. She is well supported by a group who have a variety of skills and contribute very effectively to the needs of the college.
The college's evaluation of its performance	Good. The college works hard to monitor teaching and examination results but could do more to check students' progress.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. Financial control is very good and resources are used very efficiently. Specific grants are used appropriately and tendering procedures and quality checks are used to ensure best value. The college is well supported by local firms.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE COLLEGE

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The college expects students to work hard and achieve their best. Their children's progress is good They feel comfortable to approach the college 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information about their children's progress is insufficient. The college does not work closely with them. The amount of work their children are expected to do at home.

The college has a satisfactory partnership with parents. Inspectors believe that the information provided to parents and carers is detailed and opportunities for parents to meet tutors and heads of years are satisfactory.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The college's results and students' achievements

1. Students enter the college with levels of attainment below average, overall. By the end of Year 9, standards, in 2002 were average overall, indicating students achieved well. In 2002, GCSE results were below average for 5 A* to C and for 5 A* to G grades. For 1 A* to G grades they were well below average. When compared with colleges of a similar context, grades at both levels were average overall. Standards seen in the inspection were in line with expectations and students' achievements good. Students with English as an additional language and those with learning difficulties made good progress.

2. Attainment in English is below the national average at the end of Years 9 and 11. This is because most students enter the college with low literacy skills, particularly in reading and writing, which hinders their achievement. Although they make satisfactory progress, students' achievement is better in Years 10 and 11, where it is good. Inspection evidence confirms this.

3. Attainment in mathematics is average and is above that for similar colleges in all years. Achievement in mathematics is good for students with learning difficulties and satisfactory for all others. The attitudes and behaviour of a small but significant number of students are unsatisfactory and have an adverse effect on their standards and achievement.

4. Students have satisfactory numerical skills. In science, measuring and weighing skills are effective and students can produce some good graphical work including finding lines of best fit. In French, they are confident when using mathematics in everyday contexts such as the home or market place. In history, they use a variety of methods for representing data. All have skills enough to enable them to learn in all areas of the curriculum.

5. In science, attainment by Year 9 in the work seen is in line with national expectations. Attainment on entry of the current Year 7 is above expectations and good progress is being maintained through good teaching and the gradual implementation of a national strategy. Years 8 and 9 are making satisfactory progress. By Year 11, standards in the work seen are average. This represents a considerable improvement over the past two years. Standards are particularly high in chemistry.

6. Standards of work seen in art are satisfactory by Year 9 and good by Year 11. This represents satisfactory achievement in Years 7 to 9 and good achievement in Years 10 and 11. At end of Year 9, attainment in design and technology is in line with national expectations. Achievement is good as students enter the college with below average attainment. At the end of Year 11, attainment is below national expectations in graphics products reflecting exceptional circumstances. Standards in the three other examination courses are in line with national expectations. Standards in ICT are average and students' achievements are good, particularly when their cross-curricular experience, which is not always consistent across subjects, is taken into account.

7. Students' attainment in geography, at the beginning of Year 7, is broadly average but that of previous years below average. Students in Year 7 are making particularly good progress because of the greater time available and the mainly specialist teaching. Standards in the work seen in Year 9 are below average. This indicates generally sound achievement over Years 7 to 9. By the end of Year 11 standards are broadly in line with the national average although a few are working above it. Over Years 10 and 11 most students have

made good progress. Standards in history have improved, significantly by age 14 and especially in Year 10. There they are already very good and promise to be excellent. Achievement in work seen in class shows that in Years 7 to 9 all students make at least good progress.

8. Attainment in modern foreign languages is below average as a result of staff changes and maternity leaves in recent years. Now, the overall quality of teaching is very good and students are learning well and making good progress.

9. In music, students enter the college with below average attainment in Year 7. At the end of Year 9, attainment is still below average because there is insufficient time to deliver the requirements of the National Curriculum and there is a large gap between units of study. Students' attainment at the end of Year 9 is unsatisfactory as at entry, and achievement is just satisfactory from Years 7 to 9. By the end of Year 11 attainment is still unsatisfactory and achievement is only just satisfactory from Years 10 and 11. However, progress was good in lessons seen because of good teaching.

10. By the end of Year 9, students' attainment in religious education is broadly similar to that which is expected of 14 year olds by the local agreed syllabus. Interesting and informative teaching underpins the good achievement and progress that all students, including those with learning difficulties, make throughout Years 7 to 9. Standards in the GCSE short course religious education are well above the national average and students' achievements are good.

11. In physical education, students arrive at the college from their primary schools bringing with them a range of PE experiences and knowledge, many which are below expected levels. They make good progress throughout their time at the college, they respond very positively to the good teaching and, by the end of Year 11 the overall level of attainment is at least in line with national expectations, with some students doing even better at GCSE where A*-C grades are in line with national average.

12. It is not possible to judge the progress of students with special educational needs prior to September 2002 because there is insufficient data available from the previous SENCO. However, it is clear from the co-ordinator's records that most students have made good progress against their individual education plan (IEP) targets since September 2002 and they were observed, during the inspection, to be making good progress in learning, personal and social development and in behaviour, both in lessons and in withdrawal situations. The students in the I-Zone, are making good progress over time in meeting their behavioural targets.

13. Those students for whom English is an additional language are attaining similarly to their peers and are making good progress. Students on the gifted and talented list achieve very well. In the 2002 GCSE cohort only three A* grades were originally predicted and all for one student. Actual results showed twelve students achieving a total of 29 A* grades.

Students' attitudes, values and personal development

14. Students have mostly positive attitudes to their work, play and extra curricular activities; they are keen to learn and to be taught and enjoy working on their tasks. This reflects the good teaching and very good relationships throughout the college. Most students respond to their teachers' positive caring attitudes and demand for courtesy and respect for others. Students are observant and take a pride in the presentation of their work. They are involved in a wide range of activities and make the most of the opportunities provided. They work well together in different groupings and individually.

15. Behaviour is good overall. A minority of students display inappropriate behaviour. Most students are polite, courteous and friendly to each other and to adults; they show patience, tolerance and maturity in many situations, for example when elected to the role of college councillor, and helping younger students and visitors. No instances of racism or bullying were observed. Students with behavioural difficulties respond well to firm behaviour management, well established classroom routines and stimulating activities which help them cope with problems and make progress. The number of fixed term exclusions is high whilst permanent exclusions have been considerably reduced. Students take care of college property and help with the setting up and clearance of equipment.

16. Students with special needs show a willingness to learn; they respond and behave well in lessons. For many their targets for improvement relate to aspects of personal development, including behaviour. With very effective support from staff they increase their confidence and self esteem and ability to contribute significantly to lessons. They mix well with other students and are fully integrated into the day to day life of the college.

17. The quality of relationships is very good. This helps to create an environment for effective learning. Students grow in maturity as they progress through the college carrying out their responsibilities sensibly and thoughtfully. Relationships with teachers are constructive and a real rapport is evident in lessons, which contributes significantly to students' progress. Members of the college council play a part in decision making, for example their suggestion for changes to the dining room procedures was acted upon. Most students respond well to the system of awards and certificates for achievements in academic, sporting and social areas. Many students also help with charity fund raising.

18. Attendance is just satisfactory having improved since the previous inspection. Unauthorised absence is above the national average. The poor attendance of a small number of students in Years 10 and 11 has a detrimental effect on their attainment and progress as well as on the college's attendance figures. Students enjoy coming to college and lessons begin promptly. They receive awards for good attendance. Students with difficulties related to learning or impairments are not over-represented amongst those whose attendance gives rise to concerns. However, students with special educational needs relating to behaviour are significant amongst those whose attendance gives rise to concerns and those who are excluded from college. However, the support given by the I-Zone reduces the need for such exclusions.

19. Students with special educational needs have good attitudes towards their lessons, whether they are being supported in whole classes, withdrawn for individual help or for help in small groups, including the I-Zone. During the inspection, their behaviour was always good and sometimes very good. The students in the mainstream classes show sensitivity towards those with special educational needs and as a result, they are fully included in lessons. The special needs assistants (SNAs) assist this process by unobtrusive and sensitive support, without embarrassment to the students involved.

HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?

20. Teaching and learning are good, overall. In over three-quarters of lessons, teaching was found to be at least good and in approximately a third of lessons, it was very good or excellent. Learning mirrors these proportions. A very small number of lessons were unsatisfactory.

21. In the majority of lessons there are examples of good and very good practice to draw on. Teachers have good subject knowledge and understanding. They use this well in

thorough planning and preparation of lessons. For example, they plan clear outcomes for learning lesson by lesson in particular in Geography, Drama, Music, Design and Technology and RE. In English, teachers plan good sequences of learning. Effective planning in French and German, Science and ICT ensures well paced variety of activities over time. In PE, there are well planned programmes to develop skills and practices. Carefully planned demonstrations in the Expressive Arts promote a high level of concentration for learning. In these examples the clear objectives are shared with the students at the outset of lessons giving clear direction to the learning. The students settle promptly to their work, they know what is expected of them and they learn with a good sense of purpose.

22. The specialist knowledge of teachers is also the basis of both skilful questioning and explanations. In geography for example, teachers use their wide understanding to initiate, support and clarify discussion. Questions are well directed to enable the students to make valid contributions in the expressive arts. In drama, good questioning helps the students assess their own learning and understanding. Teachers' proficiency in the language in French and German makes a significant contribution to the development of students' listening skills. In design and technology teachers use their knowledge to give good advice and guidance on computer aided design and manufacturing software. Good explanations on the use of spreadsheets in lessons in both Years 10 and 11 reflect the teacher's broad expertise. The teachers' good knowledge and skills in religious education and science ensure that the students are well advised on how to succeed in examinations and on how to improve the quality of their answers. In these examples the students are encouraged to acquire accurate, factual information and to become fluent in the language and terminology implicit in the subjects.

23. In the majority of lessons the students are well motivated. The explanation lies in the good relationships that teachers create through the use of good humour, mutual respect and an emphasis on building their confidence and self esteem. The teachers' personal enthusiasm for their subject is passed on to their students and this provides a firm basis for them to learn from each other as well as their teachers.. This is particularly true in English, geography, ICT, religious education and physical education. The variety of experiences and activities in lessons extend and consolidate learning. For example, in drama, interesting source material stimulates the students' creative skills and imagination. The use of video and other visual material along with good dialogue and discussion to illustrate key aspects of their learning are well demonstrated in French, German and geography. In religious education, interesting illustrations help the students to move towards an understanding of difficult and unfamiliar ideas. Very good use is made of reinforcement and praise to motivate the students. In French and German high expectations of the students pronunciation and intonation are combined with praise for the students' efforts. In lessons in design and technology and the expressive arts effective feedback supports progression in learning. In religious education, geography, science and ICT lessons are concluded constructively. Good support for lower achieving students in Year 10 in a lesson in PSHE ensured that they learned at a rate better than might be expected.

24. Numerical skills are taught effectively in most subjects when the need arises. In information and communication technology, students enhance their understanding of formulae by using them in spreadsheets. In design and technology students gain better understanding of shape and space using computer aided drawing software. Co-ordination across subjects is, however, very limited with most departments lacking a policy and therefore missing opportunities for improving the students' skills.

25. Lesson plans usually include objectives and strategies for students with special educational needs and there is a good dialogue between the teachers and special needs assistants (SNAs). Teachers make good use of the students' individual education plans

(IEPs) in order to plan activities related to their targets. However, current IEPs do not contain targets for numeracy.

26. Most teachers are good at asking different kinds of questions, which enable students with special educational needs to join in class discussions and they provide different kinds of worksheets to help with their literacy difficulties. However, few teachers make use of information and communication technology (ICT) to enable students to access the learning. ICT PowerPoint presentations are used well to include students with special educational needs in science.

27. In the lessons observed, the staff and students had good relationships with the students, making effective use of praise and encouragement. As a result of this, all students, particularly those with special educational needs and those in the I-Zone, worked hard and maintained their interest and concentration in lessons well. The students respond well to the caring ethos of the college, within which they feel secure and positive about themselves as learners.

28. Teachers make very effective use of the special needs assistants (SNAs) in lessons and there is a good partnership between them. The teacher special needs assistants (SNAs) offer high quality support to the students with special educational needs, including those with behavioural difficulties and those in the I-Zone. However, on some occasions behavioural difficulties were not dealt with as effectively as they might have been because there was no SNA support available.

29. In the small minority of unsatisfactory lessons unruly behaviour is not dealt with effectively or there is insufficient variety in materials and activities to sustain interest. Some immature behaviour in drama in most year groups slows the rate of learning. In other lessons there are some unsatisfactory aspects. Highly structured lessons, for example, in the expressive arts and religious education are at the expense of the students' independent learning. In design and technology the tracking and recording of students' progress lacks rigour. Some lessons in Years 7 to 9 in geography provide insufficient challenge. In science, some students are unaware of their targets and written work is often incomplete. In lessons in Years 10 and 11 in art and design some students are not clear what they need to do to improve their grades.

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

30. The curriculum is very good overall. It is well managed by the assistant headteacher who has this responsibility. It is regularly reviewed through the curriculum reference group. Statutory requirements are met in all subjects in Years 7 to 9 except music where there is insufficient time available to cover the national curriculum. The teaching time for drama is also inadequate and adversely affects continuity and progression. The curriculum has very good breadth in Years 7 to 9 but the balance needs reviewing. Changes made in the length, frequency and number of lessons in the weekly timetable have led to an overall improvement in provision. Personal, social and health education and religious education are taught as discrete subjects by specialist teachers each week throughout Years 7 to 9. There are additional periods provided for science and technology teaching in Years 7 to 9 and German is taught to high attainment groups as a second foreign language in Years 8 and 9. The application across the curriculum of literacy and numeracy is too variable and in ICT is insecure.

31. The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 is excellent. Statutory requirements are met in all subjects. In Year 11 a very wide range of GCSE subjects is offered within a very good broad

and balanced core and a two options provision with a choice of thirteen subjects. There are vocational course opportunities with GNVQ courses in science and in manufacturing and optional courses in drama, business education, media studies and childcare. In Year 10 the curriculum has been altered to provide a three pathways scheme with seven separate routes that students can take as appropriate to their ability, interest and special needs. One of the main strengths of this excellent course is that it offers a significant vocational element within the options available so that most students follow a GNVQ in design and technology, health and social care, ICT, leisure and tourism or science. Students on the higher-level pathway all take an ICT vocational GCSE as do some students in the middle pathway. A third very successful pathway, followed by a very small number of students with behavioural and other special needs offers off site provision on three days a week in work placements and practical training courses.

32. Overall the curriculum provides flexible, varied and relevant programmes of study across the ability range with increasing emphases on the needs of low attainers through applied practical courses run in partnership with a number of local providers such as Sheffield College. It is a model of good practice.

33. The College has a literacy co-ordinator and literacy across the curriculum has been matched to in-service training and development planning with specific targets for departments to achieve. There is however, no time allocated for monitoring the work of departments and as yet, it is too early to evaluate the effectiveness of the plan. The Catch Up sessions for Year 7 students working at Level 3 in English are also at the early stage of development. As yet, there is not a cohesive plan for the sessions. The library provision makes a good contribution to developing literacy across the curriculum and has a suitable range of texts to appeal to the wide ability range. Some subject areas have literacy strategies built into schemes of work. Subjects across the curriculum use appropriate literacy strategies to support learning. These are well developed in English, religious education, food technology and geography. Students are given subject specific words. For example, in science, power point is used to highlight new words and in religious education, students use the thesaurus to discover the meaning of words. However, all departments do not record key words or use them effectively to help students understand their work or to pronounce the more complex vocabulary correctly. Some departments provide students with writing frames to structure their work. There is good practice in religious education, history, and particularly in geography where teachers model text.

34. Strategies in numeracy are unsatisfactory. There is a draft college policy for teaching numerical skills which has considerable merit. All teachers have received training on the National Numeracy Strategy led by the mathematics department. As yet, however, this has not provoked much response. A first attempt at auditing departmental needs and opportunities for teaching and learning numeracy has been carried out but not very effectively so that few departments have a stated policy for the teaching of numeracy or have opportunities for enhancing the students thinking in numerical terms commonly identified. Individual examples of good practice exist. In design technology issues are well addressed in the schemes of work so that teachers are secure in what they should be doing and, for the most part, teach numeracy well. In Science, on the other hand, there is no departmental policy so that different teachers approach some aspects of number differently. Art teachers do some effective work with grids showing students how to enlarge shapes and figures in spite of having no agreed methodology for explaining how to do it. Most other subjects, like religious education, have no policy and very little evidence in lesson planning to show that they have given much thought to what is an important issue.

35. Provision for gifted and talented students is very good. Each year around 25 new students are identified as gifted by their high scores in standard tests at the end of Year 6 and

nomination by their primary schools. For each year group an extended list is compiled of students to be monitored and included in the gifted and talented programme. This comprises a further 25 higher attaining students, those nominated by departments as showing particular talent for a subject and those felt to be underachieving. This inclusive approach is very effective in maintaining the motivation and self esteem of higher attaining students falling outside the initial cohort. A wide range of extra curricular activities enrich the experience of gifted and talented students including dance, ICT and engineering clubs, extension classes in many subjects and visits to conferences, exhibitions, performances and events outside college. Good links have been established with further and higher education institutions with visits and courses for staff, students and parents at colleges and universities.

36. PSHE is provided through a well structured and coordinated taught programme in Years 7 to 9 and it is integrated for older students in the GCSE Religious Studies and Citizenship course. The programme is based on an interesting, balanced and relevant interpretation of the QCA framework and includes good strategies for teaching the recommended elements on health, sex and drugs education. The health education aspect is supplemented for students in Year 10 with an 'off-timetable' day mainly covering sex education issues. This involves the college and the wider community working together in a multi-agency approach to these aspects of the students' learning.

37. Provision for spiritual development is good. It stems from a set of core values that places mutual respect and trust at the centre of the students' community life. Frequent openings are provided for the students to reflect on emotions and beliefs and to explore significant questions about purpose and meaning. This is particularly the case in religious education, PSHE and Drama. In Science, visits to local sites of scientific interest both excite and inspire the students whilst in Geography the exploration of extreme weather conditions and their catastrophic impact provide students with a ready source of wonder. The college does not meet requirements for collective worship. The theme for the week in assemblies, however, is a likely focus for students to gain spiritual insight.

38. Provision for moral development is good. The college has established a clear moral framework for the students to learn to distinguish right from wrong and to act responsibly on their knowledge. In religious education older students are provided with a very good grounding in moral reasoning and in the links between values, lifestyle and consequences. Opportunities are well taken by teachers in English, for example, when engaging the students in discussion on moral issues that arise in the study of literature. In geography the conflict of interests with regard to energy resources enables the students to explore a topical moral dilemma. Teachers value the contribution of students and good behaviour and respect for others are reflected in the good relationships between teachers and students in almost all lessons.

39. Provision for social development is good. The class, year and whole college councils underpin the students' contribution to the social life of the college. They learn to work together democratically and students say that they value the opportunity to have their views represented. This is particularly the case in PSHE and drama. Older students act as mentors for students new to the college and the 'buddy club' is a good example of the developing opportunities for students to help and support each other. Achievement is well celebrated in assemblies. The sharing of success helps the students to take pride in their college.

40. Cultural development is satisfactory. The students participate in theatre and art trips along with residential visits abroad. There are some good opportunities provided through subjects for students to broaden their cultural understanding. In Drama the students participate in dramatic productions including theatre in education whilst in English, Greek

drama has been introduced in Year 11 to broaden the students' experience of other cultures in literature. In Art, a project on making masks from around the world promotes lively discussion on their cultural origins and in religious education the students systematically explore beliefs and values in major world faiths. A recent visit by the local MEP has promoted some good display on the work and structure of the European Community. The students' multi-cultural knowledge and understanding in particular within their own community and region is less well developed. The college's policy for this aspect has yet to be fully implemented.

41. There is good extra-curricular provision. It is particularly good in science and technology where there are science and technology enterprise programmes club, design presentation, research and design skills master classes, CAD/CAM master classes and ICT work clinics. There is an active lunchtime club every day in the special needs base and on the first day of the inspection up to 20 students were involved in ICT activities, ranging from computer games to internet research for homework. There is a good range of team sports available and they are well supported by students who perform well in inter-form, local and regional college competitions. There are good additional study facilities available for students including study support sessions, extension classes and revision classes that take place lunchtimes and after college in a number of subject areas. The 'I-Zone' offers a "breakfast club". Students can breakfast in the canteen and then undertake a variety of activities, mainly computer based, in the I-Zone base. This is a very worthwhile service as it is including students from a wide range of social backgrounds and making them feel valued and supported

42. There are enrichment opportunities, including visits to theatres, museums, and fieldwork trips such as the geography excursion to the Peak District and residential trips to France and Germany in modern foreign languages. There are recorder lessons, choir and instrumental practice and these students have performed well in concerts and at the cathedral.

43. The college has developed very good links with partner institutions. Links with the four main feeder primary colleges are particularly well developed through the "Birley Family of Schools" structure. Staff at all levels, in each of the schools, meet regularly to work closely together to ensure that all students experience a smooth and trouble free transition to the college. There are joint teaching and learning projects in the core subjects, specialised ICT support and a junior sports-leaders' scheme of physical education and games support for primary schools through e.g. Rugger festivals. The college is working closely with three neighbouring secondary colleges and together are seeking a substantial grant to add to present vocational learning development focused on cross phase ICT. At post-16, links with Sheffield College in 14 to 19 progression are well established and working well. There are also good links with local sixth form colleges such as the King Edwards V11 Sixth Form Centre. Initial Teacher Training links with Sheffield, Sheffield Hallam and Leeds Universities are productive. A very good professional partnership exists with thirty-five students trained at the college last academic year.

44. The provision for careers education and vocational education overall is good. There is a limited careers education programme in Years 9 and 10. The Year 11 careers education course is well established and is successfully delivered through the personal, social, and health education programme. Students in Year 10 undertake a two weeks work experience arranged by the South Yorkshire Business Education Partnership. It is generally well thought of by students but there is inadequate follow up and monitoring of the students' experience. There is currently a coordinator covering the students experience from Year 9 to 11 that covers both careers and work experience, but this is underdeveloped in Years 9 and 10. Arrangements are made for students to visit post-16 colleges and representatives for these

colleges also visit to provide information on post 16 education and work opportunities. The careers advisory service offered by Connexion staff is of high quality and provides very valuable professional guidance and advice on careers through individual and group interviews. However, there is need to significantly increase the time provided for this work.

45. Overall the contribution of the community to students learning is very good. The college has an extremely effective partnership with adults within the community with over two hundred and fifty learners enrolled on sixteen different courses delivered in the locality. The college also coordinates what is on offer from other providers such as Sheffield College and the Open Door Network. The strong links with community primary colleges and the range of work experience placements in local business and industries are significant providers of enrichment to the curriculum. There are also direct industrial links with a number of local firms particularly Gripple Systems who provided Technology College Sponsorship and work placements for disaffected students. Other industries like A.E.T. Engineering are planning off-site engineering training in partnership with the college and Donna Ruth Enterprises provide support for business enterprise students and host a Christmas Fayre with art, drama and music students. The college support for charities within the local community is very good indeed with students collecting substantial amounts of money, often through sponsored events. The college was represented on community groups such as the Birley Moor Triangle Community where current discussions involved the use of the community recreational field.

46. The college implements the requirements of the National Curriculum on the inclusion of students with special educational needs. Some students are withdrawn in small groups for extra support and help in literacy at the same time as it is timetabled for the other students. There is no doubt that these withdrawal sessions benefit the students' access to a wider curriculum in the long term because of they increase literacy skills.

47. Many students with special educational needs are able to take GCSE courses and for those that are not, there are ASDAN youth award courses and a range of vocational courses available through the different "Pathway" schemes. The Pathway 3 courses provide stimulating course for students who might otherwise be disaffected. Students, who are likely to find GCSE courses and examinations difficult, receive appropriate support.

48. The college's detailed and comprehensive inclusion policy identifies the "at risk" groups, the problems faced and the college strategies. The college recognises the need to raise the attainment of all students through the curriculum and the development of life-long learning skills and attitudes for all. Systems are in place to ensure that all students are achieving their potential and deriving the maximum benefit according to their individual needs. The integration (I) Zone provides a good example of inclusion at its best. The zone provides behaviour management skills to a small number of disaffected students. The students attending the I-Zone, because of their behavioural difficulties, miss certain mainstream lessons each week. However, if it was not for the positive intervention work done with them there, they would probably have been excluded from college and therefore have received no schooling at all. Short-term lack of access to the full curriculum is justified because it enables a greater access in the longer term.

49. Racial harmony in the college is good. By identifying the vulnerable students and taking appropriate action the number of exclusions should be considerably reduced. Inclusion is a strength of the college.

HOW WELL DOES THE COLLEGE CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?

50. Provision for the welfare and health and safety of students is very good. A disciplined yet friendly atmosphere enables a sensitive and reassuring support system to thrive. Staff

know the students and their families well and show a good understanding of their emotional needs in college, home and within the community. The quality of learning is enhanced by this support.

51. Procedures for monitoring students' progress and personal development are very good. A pastoral structure provides each student with a significant adult who reviews progress; this is supported by individual tracking of students linked to subject performance. Students' planners and a very good mentoring system provide additional information from Year 7 and is effective in helping students and parents gain a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of a student's work. Students understand their individual improvement targets and are aware of their achievements and what they need to do to improve. Students with special educational needs, including gifted and talented, are identified in their final year at Primary school and appropriate measures taken to support them in college. Annual reviews meet requirements.

52. Child protection procedures are very effective. All staff are aware of the arrangements and the college maintains good links with the support agencies. Three senior staff are responsible for record maintenance. A comprehensive health and safety policy contributes to the students' welfare and good procedures exist for carrying out risk assessments. Medical and First Aid support is of a high standard. The site manager and his staff take good care of the college and its surroundings.

53. The college has very good procedures for promoting discipline and good behaviour. The discipline policy provides comprehensive guidance on how to deal with unacceptable behaviour and is implemented throughout the college. Incidents of bullying are taken seriously and parents are invited into college to ensure that problems are speedily resolved. A stepped series of sanctions is carried out when necessary and parents are kept appropriately informed and involved. These procedures have contributed to the reduction in permanent and fixed term exclusions.

54. Procedures for monitoring and improving attendance are good and the college works closely with the education welfare officer in seeking to improve attendance particularly in Year 11. Parents are made aware of the procedures to follow when their children are absent from college. Attendance awards and checks on first day absence have helped to improve attendance since the last inspection.

55. The learning support assistants provide very good support for students with special educational needs. This is undertaken in close co-operation with teachers. Parents of children with special needs feel well supported and are very satisfied with their progress. The mid-day supervisors are very effective in controlling the dining areas and in ensuring students return to classes promptly. A breakfast club and numerous lunchtime and after college activities are provided by the college.

56. The PSHE programme for students in Years 7 to 9 makes a significant contribution to the college's care, support and welfare arrangements. The good quality teaching typically informative, interesting and relevant engages the students in a wide exploration of issues related to health, sex and personal education. Much of the work involves the students in learning new skills to deal with these issues responsibly now and in the future as adults in society. The work is well coordinated and the learning of the students is closely monitored. Provision in PSHE has a significant impact on the students learning and self esteem. This is a strength of the college.

57. The youth clinic, recently introduced, is a strong initiative that places the college in the forefront of thinking on measures to guide young people in college today. It is organised by a

learning mentor who is also a college nurse. This ensures that expert advice is provided. The steady flow of students that drop into the clinic indicates that they appreciate the confidential and informal way it is run and the advice and care offered.

58. Transition arrangements are very effective. Liaison with the primary feeder colleges is having a positive impact on the planning for continuity in students' work and progress. The Pathway programme provides students with a choice of educational avenues and helps to prepare them for their future careers. The college has close links with Sheffield College and sixth form colleges and provides good careers advice to all students.

59. The system for assessment, recording and reporting students' attainment and progress has evolved in recent years. The policy for whole college procedures for assessment of learning was revised in June 2002. The policy for target setting, monitoring and reviewing progress was revised in January 2003. General advice is given to help departments organise their own systems. Assessment information is used to guide curricular planning by some departments, but this needs to be extended to all departments. There is a whole college marking policy, which gives clear guidance to teachers. Work is given national curriculum grades where possible, and these grades are held centrally in departments and by the college. Students are tracked twice each year, and given National Curriculum or GCSE grades. The Assessment Manager enters the data on the college system, and this is available to all staff. Some departments also have examples of students' work at different levels. Some departments have better systems than others, but most are good. The systems in English and music are very good, but in ICT they are unsatisfactory in Years 7 to 9.

60. Heads of year organise reporting to parents. There is a satisfactory level of reporting: there are two days each year when tutors discuss progress with students. If there is a cause for concern, the tutor contacts parents. There is also a parents evening for each year. A full report is issued in the summer term for Years 7 to 10, and in January for Year 11. Reports give details of academic and other progress, and the information is generally good and helpful to parents. However, the academic targets set for students in some subjects are not sufficiently precise. The Head Teacher has a strategy which includes consulting parents and reviewing the reporting procedures in the future. Overall, assessment, recording and reporting are good.

61. There is no assessment of numeracy at present because the new SENCO has not been able to organise it yet. From this, each student who is identified as having special educational needs is provided with an individual education plan (IEP) and they and their parents or carers are involved in setting the targets within these. Where appropriate, local education authority advisory teachers and the college's educational psychologist are involved in this assessment process. The college makes good use of external support for special educational needs.

62. Each student's targets are reviewed each term and modified or changed, if necessary. Ongoing assessment and reviews of targets are used to provide materials for the annual reviews of statements and annual reports to parents.

HOW WELL DOES THE COLLEGE WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

63. The relationships between the college and parents and carers are satisfactory.

64. The response to the questionnaire distributed before the inspection and the parents meeting indicated that parents think the college has improved and provides a good standard of education. Parents are pleased with their children's progress, the approachability of the staff and that the college expects their child to work hard. Several parents were concerned about the lack of information regarding their child's progress and they felt that the college did

not work closely enough with them. Smoking in college, standards of dress and homework provision were also areas of concern to parents. Inspection findings partially support the parents' views of the college.

65. The college is reviewing contacts with parents and is looking at ways of involving them more directly in their children's learning.

66. The parents of those students with learning difficulties are appropriately included in their child's review and are kept fully informed. Several parents referred to the good support the college provided for their children.

67. The college prospectus could be improved to more fully reflect and enhance the image of the college. Student homework diaries are used effectively by students, parents and teachers. A termly newsletter, annual governors' report and the student charter provide additional information about the college and its requirements. Annual reports to parents are satisfactory but more information as to what needs to be done to further improve standards is necessary in some reports. Information evenings for parents are held throughout the year with particular emphasis placed on the open evening for Year seven parents and the options for older students as they progress through college.

68. Whilst there is no formal parent teacher association parents are encouraged to help on educational visits.

69. Prior to September 2002, the involvement of parents and carers in reviewing the needs of their children with special educational needs was unsatisfactory and this is reflected in the comments of several parents and carers at the pre-inspection meeting. The links which the SENCO has established with parents and carers since September 2002 are very good and have contributed greatly to the confidence which the students feel, in the support they are receiving.

HOW WELL IS THE COLLEGE LED AND MANAGED?

70. Leadership is excellent. The headteacher and senior leadership group have a clear vision for the college which is beginning to be made manifest. They have achieved much. The thrust to improve teaching and learning and implement integrated learning systems is beginning to bear fruit. Under new leadership there has been a significant change of direction. The college has shifted its focus toward technology and the involvement of the community. To ensure improvement, each department is reviewed internally and teaching is checked by line managers. Management, including co-ordinators and heads of years and departments, is very good. All have either been well selected or have had appropriate professional development to ensure improvement.

71. The governing body is well led and has a core of very hardworking and useful members. They have a clear understanding of the strengths and developmental areas of the school. A point for improvement hovers around the implementation and stabilisation of the many new initiatives that have been and are being introduced.

72. The leadership and management of special educational needs in the college was unsatisfactory prior to September 2002. Since the appointment of the current special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) from September 2002, the leadership and management has been very good. The SENCO has prioritised her re-organisation of the department well, concentrating initially on the assessment of the students' special educational needs, training and support to colleagues, to the special needs assistants (SNAs) and to parents and carers, building the team of special needs assistants (SNAs) and

supporting the Manager and special needs assistants (SNAs) working in the I-Zone (inclusion zone). She has also audited the resources and made a very good start on updating them. The co-ordinator has adopted the management of the I-Zone (inclusion zone) since December 2002 and has provided useful support for the I-Zone Manager, who is well experienced and gives good support to the students and also to the newly appointed team of three special needs assistants (SNAs) attached to it.

73. The gifted and talented programme is very well co-ordinated incorporating elements from the ASDAN award scheme, Excellence Challenge scheme and the Pathways programme. The co-ordinator works very effectively with subject staff to raise the standard of provision for gifted and talented students from primary school to post 16.

74. The governors and senior staff of the college make very good strategic use of resources including specific grants and other funding. Decisions are focussed on how best to improve the standards attained by the students. The most recent auditors' report of June 2000 made very few recommendations for improvement, each of which has been acted upon. Very good financial systems are now in place with appropriate procedures for assuring probity. Governors are very well briefed at regular meetings of the finance sub-committee and concentrate on ensuring that spending supports plans for the college's development. This means that all aspects of development are considered and any assumptions challenged before major money decisions are taken.

75. Very good use is made of information technology in the college's administration. Equipment is updated on a rolling programme. No computer is more than three years old. Teachers and the college's careers officers have computer access to all central information about the students' academic results and progress. Registration is computerised, as is the writing of the lesson timetable.

76. The governors pay close attention to achieving best value. All major contracts are subject to written tender and regularly reviewed. Decisions are taken to change these contracts as has recently been the case with college meals or not as has occurred with payroll and personnel on the basis of value not just what is cheapest. Excellent administrative arrangements reduce the teachers' administrative burden. An example of this is that the photographic company chosen to take the annual college photographs handles all arrangements to do with money. Furthermore register checks and phone calls to absent students on the first day they are away from college are made by administrative staff. There is typing support available for all teachers.

77. Considering the students' sound achievement and good attitudes, the college's good teaching, very good leadership and management and good improvement since the last inspection the overall level of the college's effectiveness is good. Weighing this against relatively high costs and the below average socio-economic circumstances within which the college operates this constitutes good value for money.

78. Overall there are adequate resources to support learning in the college. A fairly small but well-appointed, light and airy library provides a good quiet area for study for up to thirty-two students at a time. Each study place is designed a writing area which can be opened up to form a computer work place. Most stock is recently acquired and there is a small but good selection of paperback fiction targeted for readers aged between eleven and sixteen. The books are all bar coded and lending arrangements are computerised with books signed out by thumbprint as well as being signed for. Stock losses are low because of the efficiency of the librarian and the systems she has devised.

79. Most departments have sufficient resources. Only English has unsatisfactory provision. Here there are insufficient text books to meet the demands of the GCSE courses and students are not therefore able to take them home to study. There is also a shortage of overhead projectors in English classrooms. Design technology has a good range of tools and machinery but has insufficient to be able to teach control technology properly. Physical education is short of textbooks. Art, on the other hand, has a good range of artefacts for use in class as has religious education. Although the college has more than the average number of computers available to students, demand still outstrips supply. Subjects such as Religious education and geography frequently find access to computers difficult.

80. Overall, the match of teachers to the needs of the curriculum is very good. Teachers are deployed mainly in their specialist subjects. There are some weaknesses in history; however, the college has identified this as a priority for development. Since the appointment of the new special educational needs co-ordinator, the department is well provided with staff. Classroom assistants and technical support staff make a valuable contribution to the work of the college, particularly in design and technology and science. The college is well supported by the work of the administrative and clerical staff. There is a very effective performance management system in place, which is contributing to rising standards and is linked to the college's agenda of self-evaluation. Training needs are linked to department reviews and the whole college development plan. The college provides a successful Graduate Teacher Programme. Over the past two years, at least 8 former participants have been appointed as newly qualified teachers in the college. There are very thorough induction procedures, for both newly qualified teachers and all other new staff.

81. During the last few years, major improvements to the college's accommodation have been made, and the overall quality is now at least satisfactory, with much of it judged to be good. Most subjects are now taught in suited accommodation with good office and storage space. The exceptions to these are the facilities for design and technology. The rooms for this subject are judged to be too small, but there are plans for the department to move into two purpose built rooms in September 2003. The dining room facilities are too small for the number of students who are using it. There is a shortage of suitable indoor facilities for physical education when the playing fields cannot be used, and the changing rooms are in need of refurbishment

82. Although litter is a problem where is very little evidence of vandalism or graffiti. The site manager and his staff make a valuable contribution to the high standard of maintenance of the accommodation. Very good examples of students' work, and photographs of college activities, do much to enhance the appearance of the buildings.

WHAT SHOULD THE COLLEGE DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

83. In order to improve further the standards achieved by students, governors, the headteacher and staff should seek to:

1. Improve the timing and continuity of subjects in the expressive arts faculty, especially music by:
 - a. Ensuring that music is given sufficient time to deliver the requirements of the syllabus
 - b. Ensuring that subjects in this area are not adversely affected by the long gaps that, at present, occur in the carousel arrangement.
2. Improve students' literacy communication across the college by:
 - a. Raising standards of writing
 - b. Encouraging students to speak at length in class
3. Improve the contribution to the teaching of numeracy by all teachers by:
 - a. auditing present provision
 - c. creating a clear plan for each subject and embedding this within departmental schemes of work.
4. Ensure that assessment procedures are used consistently across the college and that resulting data is used to raise standards by:
 - a. Checking all departments are following a similar approach to assessment.
 - b. Encouraging departments to analyse data within their area with respect to gender and other important criteria
5. Continue to improve the behaviour of a small but significant group of students by:
 - a. Identifying all those at risk of disaffection
 - b. Ensuring that they all have opportunities to re-dress and improve their behaviour by being given time in the 'I-Zone' or in some other way.
 - c. Encouraging such students to take appropriate pathways that will interest them.

OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES

Assessment of pupils with special educational needs

84. The assessment procedures were unsatisfactory before September 2002, during the considerable period of time when the then special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) was absent from school. Since the current SENCO took up her post in September 2002, the procedures which she has introduced for literacy and behaviour are good. However, as there is no assessment of numeracy in place yet, assessment procedures are currently satisfactory overall.

85. Before taking up her appointment in September 2002, the SENCO attended the annual review meetings of all the pupils with special educational needs at the six feeder primary schools, in their Year 6, prior to admission. The pupils made an extra visit to the one school in addition to the one visit which all Year 6 pupils made. All the parents and carers of pupils in the new Year 7 were invited to meet her. The pupils are assessed for reading and for specific learning difficulties (dyslexia) at the beginning of Year 7. Behaviour is also assessed, through the effective monitoring of incidents of inappropriate behaviour in lessons and around the school.

86. From these assessments, each pupil who is identified as having special educational needs is provided with an individual education plan (IEP) and they and their parents or carers are involved in setting the targets within these. Where appropriate, local education authority advisory teachers and the school's educational psychologist are involved in the assessment and target-setting process.

87. Each pupil's targets are reviewed each term and modified or changed, if necessary. Ongoing assessment and reviews of targets are used to provide evidence for the annual reviews of statements and annual reports to parents.

88. This assessment and target-setting process which has been introduced since September 2002 is of high quality and the targets are actively used by teachers and special needs assistants (SNAs) to plan teaching.

89. The assessment system for pupils with behavioural difficulties effectively identifies the pupils who need extra support and help within the I-Zone system and enables specific behavioural targets to be set.

PART C: COLLEGE DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	156
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and students	75+

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	7	47	76	22	4	0	0
Percentage	4	30	49	14	3	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. [When the total number is substantially less than 100, add] Care should be taken when interpreting these percentages as each lesson represents more than one [two, three, etc] percentage point[s]. [Where the total is close to or greater than 100, use only the first sentence.]

Information about the college's students

Students on the college's roll	Y7 – Y11
Number of students on the college's roll	1180
Number of full-time students known to be eligible for free college meals	163

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11
Number of students with statements of special educational needs	6
Number of students on the college's special educational needs register	251

English as an additional language	No of students
Number of students with English as an additional language	4

Student mobility in the last college year	No of students
Students who joined the college other than at the usual time of first admission	10
Students who left the college other than at the usual time of leaving	19

Attendance

Authorised absence

%

Unauthorised absence

%

College data	9.4
National comparative data	7.8

College data	2.8
National comparative data	1.2

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 (Year 9)

Number of registered students in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	130	109	239

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	60	85	80
	Girls	68	78	73
	Total	128	163	153
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	College	54 (65)	68 (61)	64 (69)
	National	66 (64)	67 (66)	66 (66)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	College	22 (35)	41 (36)	36 (33)
	National	32 (31)	45 (43)	33 (34)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Girls	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Total	0	0	0
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	College	n/a (44)	n/a (63)	n/a (51)
	National	67 (65)	70 (68)	67 (64)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	College	n/a (16)	n/a (33)	n/a (19)
	National	32 (31)	44 (42)	34 (33)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 (Year 11)

Number of registered students in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	111	123	234

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	40	94	101
	Girls	51	108	116
	Total	91	202	217
Percentage of students achieving the standard specified	College	39 (32)	86 (88)	93 (94)
	National	50 (48)	91 (91)	96 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per student	College	35.0
	National	39.8

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

Vocational qualifications		Number	% success rate
Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those students who achieved all those they studied	College	[]	[]
	National		[]

Ethnic background of students

	No of students
Black – Caribbean heritage	2
Black – African heritage	
Black – other	2
Indian	
Pakistani	1
Bangladeshi	1
Chinese	2
White	1149
Any other minority ethnic group	23

Exclusions in the last college year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage		
Black – African heritage		
Black – other		
Indian		
Pakistani		
Bangladeshi		
Chinese		
White	141	3
Other minority ethnic groups	6	

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 – Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	56
Number of students per qualified teacher	18.3

Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	28
Total aggregate hours worked per week	723

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	74.7
---	------

Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	25.4
Key Stage 4	23.3

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2002
----------------	------

	£
Total income	3,666,475
Total expenditure	3,753,709
Expenditure per student	3,181
Balance brought forward from previous year	152,792
Balance carried forward to next year	65,558

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the college during the last two years	20.15
Number of teachers appointed to the college during the last two years	25.46

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	-
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	-
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	-

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1180
Number of questionnaires returned	251

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes college.	29	50	16	5	0
My child is making good progress in college.	35	56	6	1	2
Behaviour in the college is good.	27	44	13	6	10
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	17	57	18	6	2
The teaching is good.	19	63	8	1	9
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	16	47	22	12	3
I would feel comfortable about approaching the college with questions or a problem.	31	52	8	6	3
The college expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	49	45	2	1	3
The college works closely with parents.	14	50	20	9	7
The college is well led and managed.	22	47	11	6	14
The college is helping my child become mature and responsible.	24	58	9	2	7
The college provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	25	53	11	2	9

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

ENGLISH

90. Overall, the quality of provision in English is **good**.

Strengths

- The quality of teaching and the strong commitment to improving standards.
- Very good procedures for marking and assessment.
- Very good leadership and management.

Areas for improvement

- Low standards of literacy, particularly in reading and writing.
- Insufficient access to ICT and resources for the GCSE examinations.

91. Less than half of the Year 7 students enter the College with literacy skills that are at or above the national average. In the 2002 national tests taken at the end of Year 9, results were well below average but below average for similar colleges. This was a decline on the previous results, which were in line with the national average. Gifted and talented students achieve well and between 2000 and 2001, a number achieved level 8, the highest grade in the tests. Boys did slightly better than girls. The results are lower than those in maths and science. Standards of work seen during the inspection indicate that progress over time is satisfactory.

92. The proportion of students achieving grades A*-C in the GCSE examinations in English language and English literature in 2002 was below the national average but was a significant improvement on previous results over the last three years. Girls did better than boys but this has now narrowed showing an improvement in performance for all students. Gifted and talented students, mainly girls, make good progress in achieving the highest grades. Students achieved better results in maths, chemistry and physics. Based on their achievement in the Year 9 tests, they made good progress by the end of Year 11.

93. Standards in lessons reflect these results. Most students begin from a modest base but the intensive teaching and support contribute to their making the most progress during Years 10 to 11 and satisfactory progress in Years 7 to 9. Students make satisfactory progress in the development of speaking and listening skills and higher attaining students make good progress in reading and writing as well as in speaking and listening. Students with learning and behavioural difficulties make good progress because of the individual support from the learning support staff and teachers, the small teaching groups in Years 10 and 11 and the well planned lessons and resources that are matched to their needs. The few students with English as an additional language make equally as good progress as their peers.

94. Speaking and listening are average by the end of Years 9 and 11. In all year groups, students develop listening skills well. In Years 7 to 9, most readily take part in question and answer sessions and competently explain a point of view. Higher attaining students demonstrate a clear understanding of skilfully presenting a talk as seen in the Year 10 lesson where they were given the opportunity to confidently explore a scene from **Romeo and Juliet**. However, all classes do not have sufficient opportunities to discuss issues and speak at length in formal situations. The more quiet and retiring students, mainly girls, are more reluctant speakers whereas boys take a more active part in oral work.

95. Standards of reading are below average for most students and often well below their chronological ages for a significant number by the ends of Years 9 and 11. The department has recently developed reading journals in Years 7 and 8 and a certificate system to encourage reading. The private reading lessons and book reviews enhance the development of reading skills. However, there is insufficient monitoring of reading to ensure that all students read widely and choose texts appropriate to their ability. Lower attaining students, with support, begin to establish meaning when reading children's fiction or more complex literature such as '*The Ancient Mariner*'. By the end of Year 9, students understand the themes of difficult texts such as **Macbeth** with the higher attaining students grasping the implicit meanings and using quotations well to support their responses. By Year 11, students read and analyse a range of texts from different periods and heritages. This was seen in their work on Miller's **A View from the Bridge**, **Much Ado about Nothing** and poetry from other cultures in the GCSE anthology. The higher attaining students show a good appreciation of language and style whereas most middle and lower attaining students do not give an in-depth response.

96. Standards of writing are below average by the ends of Years 9 and 11. The exception to this is the higher attaining students who write fluently and accurately. These students use a wide vocabulary and continuously use the set targets to improve the quality of their written work. Plans are presently in place to encourage the gifted and talented students to take part in writing competitions. All students make good use of the writing process and planning is thorough. Written work is often well structured and most use the drafting and re-drafting process well. Students use different styles of writing and there are good strategies to support the development of writing. For example, students have a clear understanding of selecting and using quotations to illustrate a view because teachers use modelling and writing frames to support this aspect of students' written response. However, technical errors in writing prevent students from gaining the higher levels and grades in external examinations. Assessment procedures and individual help encourage students to improve their work but some middle-attaining students, mainly boys in Years 9 to 11 adopt a slap-dashed attitude to their work. Evidence indicates potential in their work but they do not develop their ideas and sentence level work is littered with informal language.

97. The quality of teaching and learning is good with much that is very good in all year groups. Teachers use their subject expertise and knowledge of the GCSE examinations and the National Framework for teaching English in Years 7 to 9 to plan sequential lessons which contribute to students building up their knowledge and understanding. Students learn well because resources are matched to needs and objectives are linked to the assessment criteria. This increases students' knowledge of their own learning, as they know what they need to do to improve their work. Literature is well taught and teachers develop students understanding of text level work through the emphasis on vocabulary and use of language. For example, in Year 7, students after discussing the use of language in the 'Ancient Mariner', identified the ballad features, the narrative voice and emerging themes. Students' appreciation of the poem led to a boy of minority ethnic background using the Internet to gain a full copy of the poem for his private reading.

98. Teachers' expectations are high and students are expected to work at full stretch. They manage their students very well, use humour and adopt a patient and understanding attitude when dealing with reluctant workers. The strong management and organisation contribute to students learning well as teachers insist on a 'can do it' approach. This helps to increase students' confidence and their positive attitudes contribute significantly to their learning. Written work is marked in detail and provides clear targets for improvement. On the occasions when teaching and learning are only satisfactory it is because pace is slow and activities are not well balanced. Teachers use the study of literature to promote

students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Students explore moral issues through media assignments on for example, drugs education in Year 11. They learn about other literary heritages through a selection of poems from other cultures and traditions, for example, in Year 8 and in the GCSE Anthology.

99. The department is very well led and the head of department is ably supported by the second in charge and a committed team. There have been improvements in the curriculum since the last inspection with the revision of schemes of work and the implementation of the Literacy Strategy. Teaching has improved significantly and is a strength. Procedures for monitoring and assessing teaching and learning are methodical and underpin day to day teaching and learning, but there are too few opportunities for teachers to keep abreast of new initiatives. Resources are insufficient to meet the demands of the new GCSE examinations. Provision for ICT was inadequate at the time of the last inspection and this is still the case.

Drama

100. Overall, the quality of provision in drama is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Subject expertise and leadership.
- The strong tradition of drama productions.
- The range of the curriculum.

Areas for improvement

- Results in the GCSE examinations.
- The allocation of curriculum time for the subject
- Use of the drama studio throughout the year.

101. The subject is taught as a separate option and at present there is one option group in Year 11. All students in Years 7 to 9 experience drama for a part of the academic year. From the limited number of lessons observed, standards by the end of Year 9 are satisfactory. The 2002 results in the GCSE examination were well below the national average and were a decline on the previous year when they were well above the national average.

102. Most students enjoy drama and participate well when joining in starter activities as well as group work. They listen attentively when observing each other's performance and show a clear understanding of how to improve role-play when evaluating their work. Year 8 and 9 students work very well in groups to generate and develop ideas. Their diary work includes detailed evaluation of their work. By Year 11, students display a good understanding of drama conventions and adapt well to new styles and conventions. This was well illustrated when they practised and talked about the Greek chorus in Sophocles **Iphigenia**. Students in all year groups use the opportunity to take control of their learning and enjoy putting forward suggestions and leading others. Year 11 students in practising the chorus showed enthusiasm and a willingness to take on a leading role in chanting the words to new rhythms. Students attach the importance necessary for their written GCSE coursework, which provide a clear overview of dramatic techniques and conventions.

103. Teaching and learning overall are satisfactory with good features. Lessons are very well structured with clear learning objectives and outcomes. Starter activities are used to engage students and instil discipline of co-operation and attentive listening. Clear expectations of behaviour and work are established and various strategies are used to maintain interest and involve students in their learning. For example, in Year 9, students with

behavioural difficulties worked well because they were sufficiently challenged during the starter activity and group work in which everyone had an equal role. Teaching makes very good use of modelling and interesting source materials to stimulate students' creative skills and imagination. Students learn well because of the effective questioning to assess their understanding of the work. However, learning is sometimes affected when the immature behaviour of students in all year groups slows down the flow of teaching.

104. The subject is well led by the subject teacher who provides good support for the non-specialist teacher. The curriculum is very well planned with interesting schemes to give students a good grasp of drama conventions. However, the amount of time allocated for the subject is minimal and this inhibits students' progress. The purpose built studio fully supports learning with high quality displays and learning materials for each year group. Nevertheless, the shortage of space prevents the use of the studio for a significant part of the year. This also affects students' progress. The lighting is not installed and there is no technical support. The department has a strong tradition of developing workshops and productions for performing in the college and local community. Plans are being developed to involve a larger number of students in productions. The subject makes a good contribution to developing students' literacy skills.

MATHEMATICS

105. Overall, the quality of provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**

Strengths

- Above average standards compared with similar colleges.
- A well led, coherent, hard working team.

Areas for development

- The beginnings and ends of lessons.
- Students' awareness of the need to improve their own performance.
- The unsatisfactory behaviour and attitudes of a minority of students.

106. Students scored in line with the national average in the National Curriculum tests taken at the end of year nine in 2002. Their results were above those of students in similar colleges. There is a rising trend over time that is broadly similar to that nationally. Girls usually score better than boys.

107. The work of students aged between eleven and fourteen seen during the inspection was similar to that in the tests. In part improvement stems from better departmental organisation and more consistent teaching. What was seen represents satisfactory progress over time. By the age of 14, higher achieving students show that they are competent at algebra. They can solve simultaneous linear equations, substitute into expressions and multiply algebraic brackets. Average attaining students can use formulae to find the area of triangles and trapezia. They can order add and subtract negative numbers. Current year nine students in the lowest sets can collect and record discrete data in a frequency table use the information to draw a bar chart. They can add and subtract money in pounds and pence.

108. Results in the 2001 GCSE exams mathematics were close national levels for all colleges and above those for students in similar colleges. These results show a marked improvement over what might have been expected from these students' performance in the national examinations for fourteen year olds in 2000.

109. The work of the students currently in Years 10 and 11 seen during the inspection reflected these results. Students in top ability sets show good understanding of Pythagoras' theorem, solving triangles in three dimensional problems. They have a grasp of proportion and inverse proportion. Middle attainers can draw a scattergram and recognise what sort of correlation is represented by it. The students who find most difficulty with mathematics can estimate heights and lengths quite well by eye but are weak handling fractions and find algebraic substitution difficult. Number skills overall are similar to those found nationally.

110. As in earlier years in the college, girls perform better than boys, not least because girls usually pay more attention in class and work harder. The college has very few students for whom English is not the first language of the home. None of these was seen in mathematics lessons observed.

111. Students' progress in lessons, and their achievement in relation to their prior learning, is satisfactory overall. Learning support assistants who provide extra help for students with learning difficulties are well aware of what is required of them because teachers discuss what is needed in advance of lessons. They clearly enjoy their work and make a substantial contribution to the good progress that students with special educational needs make.

112. A range of teaching quality was seen during the inspection. In all lessons students' learning was closely associated with the teaching. Taken as a whole, teaching and learning are satisfactory throughout the college. In over a third of the lessons seen teaching was good or very good. In two lessons it was unsatisfactory. In a year ten lesson on ratio a significant minority of the students, most of whom were boys, was intent on doing as little as possible. The teacher tried hard but did not have sufficient variety planned into the lesson to capture their attention. Inadequate planning was also a factor contributing to lack of success in a Year 9 lesson on equations. Five of the students had missed the lesson earlier in the week that was a key to understanding but the teacher did not take this into account sufficiently. When they began to work individually on written examples these students took too much of the teacher's attention because they could not understand how to approach the questions. This meant that too little time was available for the teacher to assist the rest of the class when they were in difficulties. Consequently none made the progress they should have done.

113. By contrast, in a well taught lesson on quadratic equations the students were encouraged to discuss approaches to finding solutions by factors with some showing their thinking on the board. The pace of learning was well structured and managed by the teacher so that the students were interested in what they were doing and keen to improve. Their attitudes and behaviour were very good contributing significantly to learning. The students listen to, and learned from, each other as well as paying close attention to the teacher. Similarly, in a very good year eight lesson on probability, very good planning by the teacher ensured a variety of activities and approaches which held the children's interest. For a half of this lesson the students worked at related puzzles and problems on computers. This reinforced and enhanced what they had learned earlier. In this respect, very good support by the department's technician, who is a mathematician, was extremely valuable and helped students with individual problems as well as use his computer skills to keep the machines running efficiently.

114. Most lessons could be made better by closer attention to the use of short sharp practice sessions of mental arithmetic and problem solving at the start and by plenary sessions at the end which give scope for the students to review and reconsider what they have learned during the lessons. The department follows the national numeracy strategy in this respect. It is an improvement in current practice and developing new ideas to make it better that is required, not a radical overhaul of what is currently done. A great deal of work

has already been done improving and updating schemes of work and implementing better ways of recording and analysing the students' marks and test scores. This addresses a key requirement in the last inspection report. Making students more aware of what they already know and how to improve is rightly recognised by the teachers as an important area for development associated with their efforts to improve assessment and its use. They have made and are making progress in this respect. Students recording their current national curriculum levels on sheets in their exercise books, is considered a step in the right direction.

115. The mathematics department is well managed. Resources are carefully maintained and stored so that they are ready to hand. Monitoring of the teachers' work is effective. Departmental leadership is good. The head of department is a good teacher providing reflective leadership to a hardworking and coherent team. Together they have made sound progress since the last inspection. Teaching has improved and is set to improve further. Information and communication technology is now well used. Students are encouraged to use computers as a tool for learning; teachers use overhead projectors and the interactive white board effectively.

SCIENCE

116. Overall, the quality of provision in science is **good**.

Strengths:

- The curriculum for Years 10 and 11
- The quality of the teaching
- The leadership and commitment of the department
- The use of information and communication technology

Areas for further development:

- The setting and completion of homework
- Getting students to work towards targets
- The implementation of a numeracy skills policy

117. In 2002, results at the end of Year 11 were below national expectations, having been well below in 2001. The trend has therefore been one of improvement over the past two years. Attainment is particularly high in Chemistry. Results at the end of Year 9 in 2002 were in line with national expectations. Work seen in Years 8 and 9 indicate that these standards are being maintained. Attainment on entry of the current Year 7 in science was above national expectations and progress from these higher levels is also being maintained. The standards of work seen during the inspection, though, are in line with national expectations and students' achievements are good.

118. Developments introduced this year to produce a more inclusive curriculum for Years 10 and 11 are making a positive impact on students' motivation and progress. The wider range of courses available (Triple Award, Double Science, Single Science and GNVQ) is providing a more relevant and challenging experience for all students. Students with special educational needs are well integrated into those courses which are appropriate for them. Flexibility allows some students to move to a course where they are more likely to attain at the highest level. In Years 7 to 9 the gradual implementation of the new national strategy for teaching and learning is making a positive impact on student progress. The department is increasing considerably the opportunities for students to learn from visits of scientific interest, for example to see the electric arc furnace at the Corus steel works, and to benefit from presentations on, for example, science careers in the army.

119. Overall the standard of teaching is very good. Some is excellent and none is less than satisfactory. The best teaching is characterised by good planning and preparation; the use of a variety of methods and media to interest, involve and extend all students and the reinforcement of main points. For example, in a Year 7 mixed ability investigation into the relationship between weight and mass key words were rehearsed and a colour photograph of a spaceman on the moon was projected, students made links between the two by writing on individual white boards, well organised group practical work demonstrated the relationship and an extension sheet challenged those who were ready to go more deeply into the topic. In some of the lessons in Years 8 to 10, though, more could have been done to reinforce the learning of main concepts as some students show that they have shaky foundations to their knowledge. The teaching of Biology, Physics and Chemistry in Years 10 and 11 is challenging and the students respond well, demonstrating a sound knowledge base and setting very high standards in much of their written work. Effective strategies are being applied to develop students' literacy skills across all years but a policy is needed for the development of numeracy skills. Students say that they enjoy science and their attitudes and behaviour are good. Poor behaviour is dealt with calmly but firmly. Relationships between the teachers and their students are very good. Teachers give a great deal of positive and encouraging feedback to students both in class and in their notebooks, making a positive impact on students' attitudes. Particularly good work is recognized and valued through the awarding of 'Success in Science' points. Certificates are posted on a board and parents are informed of their child's achievement.

120. Sound assessment procedures are in place but the use of the resulting data to track progress and to set students targets is unsatisfactory. Too many students are unaware of what their targets are. Students' notebooks are checked regularly and the marking system is applied consistently. Too many students do not complete their written work. However, the setting of homework and students' response to it is very patchy with homework diaries not being used consistently enough. Many students need more help to develop an effective independent learning habit particularly in Years 7 to 9. When homework tasks are interesting and challenging some of the more motivated students produce extremely well researched and creative work.

121. The department has benefited from the College's Technology Special College status and is increasingly well equipped and resourced with Communications and Information Technology. For example, most of the laboratories now have multimedia projectors. It also has a well equipped computing suite based in the department. The new technology is being used effectively and its potential for making a big impact on teaching and learning is being exploited. It is being used innovatively with, for example, the on-line GNVQ course and virtual practicals. In such a practical year, students were able to change the conditions for an electrolysis experiment, weigh the electrodes and tabulate the results on the screen in front of them.

122. The leadership of the department is very good. The newly appointed Curriculum Leader has a clear vision for future development and the management of the department, shared with two Assistant Curriculum Leaders, is very effective. The team of teachers and technicians works well together and are committed to improving the provision in science even further.

ART AND DESIGN

123. Overall, the quality of provision in art and design is **good**

Strengths

- Very good leadership and management of the subject.
- Teachers' very good knowledge and understanding of the subject.
- Very good commitment shown by the department staff.

Areas for improvement

- Continuity of learning for students in Years 7 to 9.
- Opportunities for independent learning in Years 10 and 11.
- Student's involvement in assessing their work.

124. In Years 7 to 9 art, music and drama are taught in rotation as part of a five module course along with textiles and the Science and Technology Enrichment Programme (STEP). Modules are of seven or eight weeks with two lessons per week in Year 7 and three lessons per week in Years 8 and 9. Over the three years one module amounts to around half the recommended time allocation for art or music. Subjects benefit from smaller teaching groups.

125. Standards by Year 9 are average. This represents satisfactory achievement across Years 7 to 9. Within the eight-week modules achievement is good but the gap of over 8 months between modules means knowledge and skills have to be re-learned the following year hindering achievement overall. Standards attained by Year 11 are above average. Achievement is good over Years 10 and 11 and benefits from a more consistent allocation of time. In Years 7 to 9 there are strengths in the development of designs for printmaking, batik and a wide range of decorative and functional textile techniques. Drawings from observation are adequate as starting points for design but are overall below expectations in quality of line and form. By Year 11 students show competence in a wider range of materials including some very well formed three dimensional work in ceramics, card and plaster. Higher attainers achieve well by making very effective use of their researches into the works of artists as starting points for very decorative pieces linked to O'Keefe, Escher and Gaudi. Lower attainers achieve well in developing technical skills though they stay close to their initial ideas and learn little from the work of others. In the work seen, girls attain higher standards than boys overall but both are equally represented at the higher levels.

126. In 2002 the proportion of students gaining the higher A* to C grades at GCSE was above the national average. This continues a strong upward trend from being well below the national average at the last inspection. Over recent years girls' attainment has stayed consistently close to the national average for girls with around 3 out of 4 gaining the higher grades. Boys' attainment, though slightly lower, has risen to well above the national average for boys including A* and A grades for the first time in 2002. Teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 record above average attainment for 2002 though this was not reflected in the work seen.

127. The quality of teaching and learning is very good overall. The teachers' very good knowledge of the subject is shown in the confident way in which they engage groups of students in discussion and debate. Questions are well pitched and targeted for particular students, enabling all to make valid contributions. In an excellent textiles lesson, the introduction and demonstrations were delivered with an enthusiasm that generated intense concentration among the students. Students of all abilities benefit from the good individual guidance offered by the teachers though, in Years 10 and 11, a significant number of lower

and average attainers rely too heavily on this and show insufficient independence. Teachers make consistently good use of art and design terminology but students do not retain an adequate vocabulary for describing or evaluating their work. The impact of the very good teaching and learning in lessons in Years 7 to 9 is significantly reduced by the modular nature of the course. Although the combination of textiles with art and design delivers the required amount of time for the year, the compacted units leave insufficient time for reflection. The long gaps between units greatly disrupt continuity of learning and achievement overall. Students attitudes and behaviour are good overall and often very good in Years 7 to 9. A minority of students in some classes are boisterous and noisy but these are well managed by the teachers and disruption to others is minimised. Year 8 students showed a good level of curiosity and reasoning in exploring ideas about culture, masks and identity. They spoke and listened well and showed very good respect for the views of others. Students in Years 10 and 11 display tolerance and are mutually supportive when working on larger scale pieces in very limited space. While the large majority of students respond well to the teachers' guidance on researching artists' works, only the highest attainers show the initiative to visit exhibitions and develop their own interests.

128. Very good procedures are in place for making and recording assessments in Years 7 to 9. In Years 10 and 11 students receive good verbal feedback on their work in progress and most are aware of their predicted grades. They are not clear about the assessment criteria however, or what they need to do to improve their grades.

129. The leadership and management of art and design are very good. The subject is taught by a very knowledgeable and committed team of teachers with valuable support from the art and design technician. The department is very well documented and good annual analysis of results leads to effective planning and improvement. A strong emphasis on graphics and the design process has been successful in raising the involvement and attainment of boys over recent years.

130. Improvement since the last inspection is good. GCSE results have shown very good improvement, particularly for boys. The quality of teaching has risen to very good overall and the use of first hand resources has increased.

CITIZENSHIP

131. Overall, the quality of planned provision in citizenship is **very good**

Strengths

- Visionary leadership and management of the planning for this new subject in the National Curriculum.
- Very clear, detailed and well targeted policy documents and schemes of work.
- Already well established links to other schools and the wider community

Areas for improvement

- Training days to raise awareness of this new element of the National Curriculum.
- Student awareness of citizenship as a distinct subject is currently very slight.
- The limited timetable provision, especially in Years 7 to 9.

132. At this early-stage of its inception as a National Curriculum subject, the college has taken strategic decisions to introduce citizenship in two ways. In Years 7 to 9 it is delivered through topic-based units directly linked to established courses in PSHE, allocated only one period a week and enhanced by provision within other subject disciplines; in Years 10 and 11 it is leading to a full-award GCSE in combination with RE. The particular responsibility for its

leadership is being shared by the Head of Department for Religious Studies and PSHE and the Assistant Curriculum Leader for those subjects. The former is taking responsibility for the examination course; the latter, responsibility for citizenship in Years 7 to 9. Of necessity, the examination course is only beginning in Year 10, rolling forward into Year 11 in 2004. The lower-college provision is planned to be developed over time, concentrating first upon Year 7. However it is already being delivered across all three year-groups.

133. Standards seen in those few lessons able to be observed at this stage in the timetable cycle, as well as in written-work scrutinised, are good. For example, in a Year 7 lesson on the topic of bullying, students were well able to identify the number of different elements contributing to bullying. They understand well what is meant by it and participate enthusiastically and attentively in discussion, questioning and answering well the several issues raised. In a lower ability Year 10 group, the difficult topic of racial violence was handled with care and sensitivity. Among the examples explored were the case of Stephen Lawrence, video/film clips of the Amritsar massacre of 1919 and a more modern documentary tracing the difficult career development of a Trinidadian tailor working in Saville Row. Students were very moved by the emotional challenges presented and the manifest injustices suffered. In discussion of these topics and others, they also drew on their personal experiences of racial confrontation, referring to recent events in northern cities, clearly understanding the issues raised and challenges to society in confronting and coping with them.

134. In such lessons, very knowledgeable teachers are very well prepared to present the topics sensitively and to meet the challenges of students' wide-ranging reactions. Teachers' caring commitment and enthusiasm engenders positive responses from their students. Consequently, students' learning is considerably enhanced, as evidenced by students' own enthusiasm, attentiveness and the quality of their discussion. Such good qualities in the work seen are carefully built upon the very good planning provided by the subject leaders. Their policy documents draw well upon the national guidance and advice, adapting it expertly to local circumstances whilst mapping and matching it to the detailed requirements of the National Curriculum. For example, specific preparations were made to capitalise upon the planned visit to the school of the local Member of the European Parliament, designing lessons to prepare for and follow up the event. Other events throughout the college year enhance the esteem of students as good citizens in the wider community (musical performances in the cathedral and a primary school; the sponsorship of children in developing countries) whilst citizens from the wider community contribute their experiences to lessons, assemblies and other occasions in the college.

135. In Years 7 to 9, several departments have already planned to focus explicitly upon citizenship within their subject. For example, in mathematics in Year 9 a shopping survey will explore personal preferences and patterns of behaviour, analysing data and various ways of presenting it to show findings. Science in Year 7 will explore several issues surrounding fossil fuels, the nuclear debate and renewable energy resources. In geography, global warming, the socio-economic effects of forest fires and the importance of sustainable development will contribute particularly to citizenship. Teachers of French and German have identified specific cultural opportunities to enhance understanding of citizenship in the European context. Other subjects will also be encouraged to contribute.

136. In Year 10, the PE department has well-established links with a number of primary schools which GCSE students visit to deliver carefully planned programmes of sporting activity which they subsequently evaluate. This extracurricular activity is a particularly good example of citizenship in action and augurs well for its development across the college's curriculum and beyond.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

137. Overall, the quality of provision in design and technology is **good**.

Strengths

- Strong leadership with clear vision and energy
- Overall good teaching
- Developing strengths in the uses of ICT to design and manufacture
- Effective promotion of literacy skills
- Good extra-curricular provision

Areas for improvement

- The low standards in Graphic Products in Years 10 and 11
- The procedures for Year 9 teacher assessments
- The use of assessment information to track the progress of individuals and also to identify the differences in progress by gender
- The cluttered working environment in some rooms
- The monitoring and evaluation of teaching in order to identify and share good practice

138. In the 2002, teacher assessments undertaken by students at the end of Year 9, teachers awarded National Curriculum Levels that were well above national averages. Evidence from the inspection showed that these assessments were inflated.

139. Standards seen during the inspection were overall in line with national expectations. Year 9 students attain standards in line with national expectations when they use computer aided design software to produce detailed plans that communicate their designs well. Their practical skills are sound in all materials areas and they work safely and hygienically. They have sound knowledge of the uses of a suitable range of tools and equipment. They work well in teams. The presentation of folders is good. This is especially so in food technology. Students use drawing well to set out their ideas.

140. In the 2002 examinations students in Year 11 gained grades that averaged out at below national averages. The poor performance of students in the Graphic Products GCSE examination dragged the overall percentages down. In the other subjects average A*-C grades were around or higher than national figures. Over the three years prior to this year, results have been around national averages.

141. Year 11 students are attaining standards in work seen during the inspection that are overall below national expectations. In Graphic Products, there were below average results in 2002. Action has been taken to improve these. Strategies have already led to a noticeable improvement in standards in this subject. However standards in the present Year 11 still reflect the disruption in their learning in the previous year and remain low.

142. In Food Technology folders the evidence of coverage of areas of knowledge and understanding required by the syllabus is well presented. Students complete sound dietary analyses. There is good disassembly of existing products to contribute to research findings.

143. Students' practical skills are good. Standards in Graphic Products are overall below national expectations. Students make good card models for point of sale displays. As in all other subjects they take pride in producing quality outcomes. However there is little independent research and contribute little to product development. There is evidence of some good use of ICT to generate and modify images and to produce coursework. Resistant

Materials students produce sound practical outcomes in their timepiece project. They are competent using a range of tools and equipment. They generate and work from sound drawings. Standards in the Electronics GCSE are in line with national expectations. Students have a sound working knowledge of basic processes and techniques and manufacture a good range of products. A general weakness is in the design of the questions students in all materials areas produce for their research into customer preferences. Also though students draw well, there is little sketching to design. The department has members of staff who have expertise in computer aided design and manufacturing software and this important area is developing well in the college.

144. Standards in GNVQ manufacturing are sound. Students work well in teams identifying their own strengths and weaknesses, using this knowledge to assign roles. Their production planning is sound. They show satisfactory awareness of safety procedures. Students use a range of techniques and processes well to produce quality outcomes.

145. Teaching in the department is overall good. Teachers have good specialist knowledge and are effective in imparting this to their students through clear introductions and effective feedback as work progresses. The teaching of basic skills is good in all areas. Planning is good giving clear direction to learning. Relationships are generally good and teachers have high expectations of their students. Students respond appropriately to this level of expectation. They concentrate well and all including those with learning difficulties make good progress in most lessons. On the whole there is good control and management of students. A characteristic of the department is the calm, firm-but-fair approach that invariably works well in developing working relationships that promote good learning. Teachers give up a significant amount of their free time to offer a good range of after college activities. This helps to strengthen relationships. Though assessment in Years 10 and 11 is sound there is need of a consistent approach to the tracking and recording of students' progress. Attitudes and behaviour are generally good but a small minority of students demonstrate poor behaviour, disrupting lessons and preventing others from learning.

146. Teachers promote literacy well. This helps to advance students' learning through improving their understanding of the subject. Question and answer sessions are effective in extending understanding. The prior identification of key words and the careful introduction of their meaning, lead to greater understanding of key concepts.

147. Leadership in the department is very good. The head and second in charge of the department are relatively new and bring enthusiasm and commitment to their posts. They have made very good progress in a short space of time in identifying the problems that confront the department. They have been quick to stabilise the situation with Graphic Products while at the same time maintaining and improving standards in other areas. They are aware of weaknesses in the assessment procedures in Years 7 to 9 that were at the root of the inaccurate teacher assessments over several years and are working to remedy these. They are aware too of the need to improve their analysis of examination grades in order to identify and tackle problems such as underachievement in individuals or by gender. There is a need to improve the monitoring of teaching in order to identify and share good practice in the department. Technician support makes a significant contribution to the work of the department.

GEOGRAPHY

148. Overall, the quality of provision in geography is **good**.

Strengths.

- Improving standards evident in GCSE results and in Year 7.
- Students' good, and often very good, achievement in Years 10 and 11.
- Good teaching and learning overall, and some excellent teaching in Year 7.
- Students' good attitude and behaviour.
- Very good leadership and very competent management.

Areas for Improvement

- Students' attainment in Years 8 and 9.
- Assessment of students' attainment and progress
- The ICT and fieldwork programme in Years 7 to 9.
- Limitations in the range of learning methods and resources.

149. Standards of work by the end of Year 9 are below the national average. Students' achievement over Years 7 to 9, in relation to their below average standards when they join Year 7, is satisfactory. Low teaching time in Years 7 to 9 in previous years has restricted the depth of curriculum coverage and limited the achievement made by students. With more time this year and higher standards at entry, Year 7 students are producing standards of work close to the average and their achievement is good. Students receive a sound grounding in geographical skills. Most use and interpret Ordnance Survey maps well but more practice is needed in the accurate graphical presentation and analyses of statistical data. Students of all attainment levels have an inadequate understanding of spatial patterns. For example, they do not realise that similar climates throughout the world usually result in similar environments. Their knowledge of location such as the main mountains, rivers and cities of the United Kingdom is good although lower attainers find this difficult. Higher attainers are appropriately catered for and have good challenge in their work within the fast track groups in Years 8 and 9. Average and lower attainers achieve in line with expectation but could be stretched more in some lessons. Students with special educational needs when provided with specialist support often make good progress. Boys and girls produce work of similar standard, although boys' presentation is not usually as good as that of girls.

150. By Year 11, standards are broadly average and for some students above average. This shows generally good but sometimes very good achievement by students of all attainment levels over Years 10 and 11. It is due to consistently high quality teaching by subject specialist teachers and to students who work hard. By the end of Year 11 students generally have a sound knowledge and understanding of the main physical and human processes studied. The best independent study projects for GCSE, based on fieldwork in Sheffield, are of high quality. Average and lower attainers produce work of a standard at or above that normally expected for their prior level of attainment. Absence can hinder the progress of some students. The taught course needs supporting with a rigorous revision programme.

151. Recent GCSE examination results grades A* to C have shown a significantly improved trend from below to above the national average in 2002. The proportion of students gaining the highest grades has been slightly below average. All students achieved a pass grade. The subject is much less popular than it is nationally and the subject needs to have more appeal to students. Girls do better than boys in most years but in 2002 boys did much

better than girls. When compared with other GCSE subjects within the college geography results have been above average in most years.

152. Students' attitude to learning is mostly positive and many display real interest and enjoyment in their work, particularly in Years 7 to 11. Most students work conscientiously and are keen to learn. Behaviour is good and at times very good or excellent. In a few lessons a small number of students do not listen quietly enough when teaching takes place and have frequently to be rebuked often reducing the pace and productivity of learning. Relationships with teachers are usually constructive and the evident rapport in many classes contributes significantly to students' progress.

153. Teaching is good overall. It varies from satisfactory to excellent in Years 7 to 9; it is very good in Years 10 and 11. Staff are committed, caring and supportive of their students. The management and control in lessons, based on the constructive and effective relationships, is of a very high standard. Lessons are well planned and structured, with a clear focus providing a helpful framework for learning. Subject specialists very good knowledge underpins discussion and lends to the clarity and depth of explanations provided. The best learning occurs when lessons offer a variety of suitable practical activities that require students' involvement and use effective teaching methods such as visual aids to illustrate key aspects of the lesson. Where there is good dialogue between teacher and students this extends students' knowledge and understanding significantly. Teachers' presentation is often lively and enthusiastic, with brisk pace and high expectations. More challenge is needed in some lessons in Years 7 to 9. Boys and girls work well together but there is insufficient use made of group work. Students', particularly girls, need to participate more in lessons.

154. Learning overall is good with students acquiring new knowledge and skills well particularly in Years 7 and in the fast track groups in Year 8 and 9. It is less secure in the broader attainment groups in Years 8 and 9. Learning in Years 7 to 9 is sometimes limited by insufficient use of local Ordnance Survey maps, local examples, and atlases to help students' understanding of spatial patterns and processes. Class learning would be improved with more regular re-enforcement of teaching points visually on the board and more use of visual aids in teaching. Learning suffers when teachers do not take sufficient time to place the lesson thoroughly in the geographical context of prior learning. Literacy and numeracy skills are variable. There is some good practice but it is not uniform across the subject. ICT development has been seriously limited by difficulties of access to computers. A coherent ICT programme needs to be planned and delivered to all students in Years 7 to 11.

155. Leadership and management are very good. Documentation is thoughtfully prepared and well presented. Curriculum planning is good but needs adapting further to emphasis the learning focus to ensure improved standards in Years 7 to 9. The work of the department is suitably monitored but more time needs to be provided specifically to monitor classroom observation, analysis of students work and standardise assessment. Staffing is strength of the department. They are good professionals and work well together as a balanced team. The assessment policy is satisfactory overall but is an area for improvement. Day to day marking is variable and grading inconsistent. Generally, insufficient guidance is given to students on how they can further improve their work, more self-assessment and target setting. Very good quality wall displays provide an effective learning environment in rooms and adjacent corridors. Resources are satisfactory, but there is need of a further fieldwork budget, an overhead projector, television monitor and blinds each specialist room as standard equipment. The fieldwork undertaken in Year 7 at the Earth Centre, Doncaster, Year 8 in the Peak District and Year 10 in Sheffield provide most effective learning and greatly stimulate students' interest in the subject. However, provision for fieldwork in Years 7 to 9 is inadequate. Overall there has been good progress since the last inspection. There is very

good capacity in the department to improve standards further and implement the points made in this report.

HISTORY

156. Overall, the quality of provision in history is **good**.

Strengths

- Very knowledgeable, caring and committed teachers keen to promote good learning.
- Very good and improving book-based resources of wide-ranging levels in both the library and teaching rooms.

Areas for improvement

- Split class teaching.
- Location of teaching bases for history.

157. Standards are improving, significantly by age 14 (Year 9) and especially in Years 10 and 11. History is taught in all years to all students in Years 7 to 9 and to option groups in Years 10 and 11.

158. Standards seen in class in Years 7 to 9, and confirmed by students' files, vary widely in the range unsatisfactory to very good, reflecting the comparably wide range of ability and understanding of students on entry in Year 7. There, general standards appear low for the majority of students, reflecting a wide range of prior attainment and experience, commonly less than the National Curriculum (NC) Levels expected for 11 year olds. For example, in early work on the topic "medieval realms", many students expected modern weapons such as guns and artillery to be available to Anglo-Saxon, Viking and Norman forces. The department's schemes of work contain tasks in the Year 7 course that seek to remedy these deficiencies and students are properly challenged by hard-working teachers to improve rapidly. However, these considerable efforts remain insufficient to enable all students to be in line with expectations by age 14 although the best students far exceed them. Standards are indubitably affected by the large numbers of classes split between any two of the eight history teachers of whom only two are full-time and history graduates. This leads to inconsistencies in the standards applied and the criteria by which they are judged in the marking of written work seen. The newly appointed Head of Department has been quick to recognise this and plans are already laid to agree amongst all assessment schemes that are both consistent and coherent. Notwithstanding these difficulties, it is clear that standards in both historical and key skills improve consistently through Years 7 to 9, evident in the improved variety of presentation of statistical data using bar charts, tables and a variety of well-labelled line graphs.

159. In Years 10 and 11, those students who choose to pursue a GCSE course in history build upon the increasingly well-established standards obtained by age 14. The standard of Year 11 students, whose work has been disturbed by recent staff changes, is expected to mirror that of recent years: in line with national standards. However, Year 10 students already evidence a grasp of the subject and the demands of research, analysis and reflection to lead their teachers to expect very good, if not exceptional, results in 2004. These expectations are borne out by scrutiny of their written work, application to tasks set, attitudes and evident good learning in class.

160. These significantly improving standards in Years 10 and 11 derive from an extraordinary high level of caring commitment on the part of their knowledgeable and expert teachers. Lessons are extremely carefully prepared and well presented, more in the manner of a university seminar than a secondary school class. The dedication of such teaching is rewarded by a keen focus upon the work in hand and comparably good learning. For example, the work of Year 10 students on units concerned with Nazi Germany and the Second World War showed a keen understanding of the several contentious issues involved from both German and British & Commonwealth-allied perspectives.

161. The very new leadership and management of the department enjoy the support of specialists and non-specialists alike. Planned improvements are already in hand to secure better resources, especially in the provision of ICT, the introduction of which was hitherto resisted. The book-based resources of the department have already been improved at a variety of levels to encompass the needs of students with learning difficulties as well as the more able, gifted and talented. The college library's largest stocks of books relate to history and provide an admirable learning resource. The librarian has already supplied the new head of department with a list of available software, CD-ROMs and potential Internet links to enhance its access to teaching and learning resources.

162. All this will enhance and enrich a basically broad and balanced curriculum which contributes significantly to the ethos of the college. All teachers have an unusually and consistently high expectation of their students' good behaviour, attitudes and other interpersonal skills, promoting good standards of social and moral education and enriching students' cultural experience in diverse ways. A notable contribution has been made to the teaching of the National Curriculum citizenship programme in Year 9 where the impact of the Treaty of Versailles is explored through role play. This leads students to a greater understanding of both the challenges involved in such negotiations and the long-term outcomes for the future of Europe.

163. The department is in process of transformation and significant improvement since the last inspection.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

164. Overall, the quality of provision in information and communication technology (ICT) is **good**.

Strengths

- The range of ICT courses at examination level in order to cater for a wide range of ability and aptitudes.
- Good teaching and learning in ICT lessons in Years 7 to 9 and very good teaching and learning in examination courses in Years 10 and 11.
- The provision of learning resources on ICT examination courses.

Areas for improvement

- Assessment against National Curriculum criteria in Years 7 to 9.
- The use of ICT to enhance teaching and learning across other subjects.

165. As part of its technology status, the school is very keen to promote ICT. This is done well in Years 10 and 11, where students have the opportunity to study GNVQ IT Intermediate, GCSE Information Studies and a GCSE short course in IT. Virtually all students receive their entitlement; where they do not receive the full programme of study, it is because they are

taking special courses such as ASDAN. In Years 7 to 9, students receive most of their ICT through design and technology, where they cover required content. The science department supports the programme of study as does the mathematics department. Overall, statutory requirements are met. However, the proposed specific IT lessons in Years 7 to 9 will ensure that some present patchiness is removed.

166. In 2002, a small number of students with particular learning needs attempted GNVQ IT (intermediate). Of thirteen, three gained passes. This represented a good result given the prior attainment and attitudes to learning these students had previously exhibited. Although several did not achieve the full qualification, they gained a grounding in the course, upon which they could build later. The GCSE Information Systems course results have declined since 2000. This has not occurred because of a lowering of standards but is more down to the overall ability of those choosing this option and changes in the ICT curriculum at the college and the other courses now on offer. The short course in 2000 and 2001 enabled many students to gain an ICT qualification. Results in 2000 were above those of 2001 at higher grades but more students gained a pass grade in 2001. There was no short course in 2002. Overall, students' achievements in ICT are good at this level especially when their cross-curricular experience is taken into account. There was no significant variation in terms of gender or ethnicity. There have been some inconsistencies in standards of attainment at age 16. Overall, they have been below average in ICT examinations, although students' achieve well in relation to their prior attainment.

167. Teacher assessments, at age 14, are inflated and lack rigour. This is a serious area for improvement. Based upon lessons seen and evidence in students' portfolios, by the age of 14 the majority of work is consistent with expectations. This represents good achievement for many students who make good progress from Year 7 to Year 9, including those with learning difficulties. In a Year 8 class, very good progress was made in the use of graphic images from a variety of sources, including the internet. The use of ICT for control is particularly well developed. Many students had well developed skills for conducting effective internet searches. The images were often skilfully combined to produce visually interesting presentations, leading to above average attainment in a significant number of cases. In Year 9, students worked well in pairs and were able to follow reasonably complex instructions for using computer aided design software. There was, however, some evidence that literacy problems hampered progress in ICT lessons among lower attaining students in Year 9.

168. In Years 10 and 11, the college provides a range of examination courses to cater for all abilities. Inspection evidence indicates that standards in ICT courses in Years 10 and 11 are very often consistent with national expectations although there is some variation between courses and teaching groups. In most classes students of all abilities, including those with special needs, were making good, and in some cases, very good progress in the use of a range of software applications. In several lessons, students were able to use "HTML code" to good effect in creating and linking a number of well-produced Web pages. The standard of spreadsheet and database work was often consistent with national expectations. This success was producing a significant increase in confidence among students.

169. Teaching in ICT lessons is good overall and is very good in Years 10 and 11. Courses and individual lessons are well-planned, teaching activities are interesting and challenging. Tasks are well supported with very good ICT resources. These include, hardware, software, support booklets and an Internet based GNVQ course. Well-focussed teacher support for individuals has a very positive impact upon learning. In the majority of lessons, there are good relationships and a good working atmosphere is engendered. Expectations are high, especially on examination courses. Some excellent explanations on the use of spreadsheets were seen in examination courses and emphasis upon the correct use of key words was a feature of all lessons. In Years 7 to 9, student behaviour in and

attitudes towards the subject were good in half of the lessons seen and reflect good teaching; most were keen to learn and were cooperative. In two Year 9 STEP lessons, some unsatisfactory behaviour was in evidence. This had an adverse effect upon learning and attainment. In Years 10 and 11, students were focused upon their examination courses, as a result, behaviour and attitudes were good and sometimes very good, contributing to a positive working atmosphere in which good progress was made. Many students were gaining in self-esteem as a result of their success in class. Additional behavioural management strategies should be explored to overcome challenging behaviour in some Year 9 classes. Assessment procedures and practice in Years 7 to 9 do not provide a precise indication of attainment against National Curriculum criteria. The assessment of students' work on examination courses in Years 10 and 11 is thorough.

170. The range of the specific ICT curriculum is very good. The use of ICT to enhance teaching and learning in the subjects of the curriculum is satisfactory, overall, but there are wide variations between subjects. Very good use is made of ICT in design and technology and in mathematics. More systematic use should be included in the teaching schemes of several subjects for example English and history. However, despite the fact that the number of computers is above average for a college of this size, the demands of the large number of timetabled ICT lessons does make access difficult for other subjects. The leadership and management of this curriculum area are now very effective. Improvement in provision since the last inspection has been good and the department now has the capacity to improve standards further. Improvement should be focussed upon standards in examinations at age 16, the accuracy of assessment in Year 9, and the appropriate use of ICT in all National Curriculum subjects.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

171. Overall, the quality of provision in modern languages is **satisfactory**

Strengths

- The quality of teaching.
- Leadership by the head of modern languages.
- Work well as a team producing good and interesting resources.

Areas for improvement

- The use of more paired work and the foreign language in the classroom.
- Written work checked more carefully by students to avoid basic errors.
- The quantity of text books, readers, magazines and computer software.

172. All students study French. In Years 8 and 9, one set of students in each half year also study German: they can continue with it to the end of Year 11. No Year 10 students are currently studying German.

173. In Year 10, some students are disapplied from studying French in order to follow an alternative curriculum. In Year 11 the former system is still operating: half the students study French, and the other half German.

174. In recent years there have been frequent changes in teachers: this has had an impact upon the quality of learning and upon standards. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 were below national standards in French in 2002. In comparison with national standards, French GCSE results were very low in 2002, and GCSE results in French were lower than

standards in similar colleges in 2002. They were also lower than most other subjects in the college. Overall performance in the lessons seen in Years 7 to 11 showed students working below national standards. However, the most able in Years 10 and 11 are working at national standards, and it is expected that their GCSE results will be better than those of 2002. Students are stronger in speaking, reading and writing, and weaker in listening. When listening to a song on a French tape, Year 7 students could recognise key words which were missing on a work sheet. When speaking French, Year 10 students could ask questions about various means of public transport. When reading French, Year 8 students could understand greetings about festivals in France. Year 9 students were able to write sentences in French about furniture and room in a house.

175. Students learning German in Year 9 in 2002 were studying it as a second language on one lesson per week, so teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 were below national standards. German GCSE results were well below national standards in 2002. Results in German were well below standards in similar colleges in 2002. They were also well below most other subjects in the college. Performance in the German lessons seen in Years 8 to 11 showed students working below national standards. When listening to a German tape, Year 8 students could understand details about the height, hair and eye colour of various people. They could also write descriptions of people. When speaking German, Year 9 students were able to give their opinion about different college subjects. Year 11 students were able to read texts in German and understand detailed information about hotel bookings.

176. Overall, there is a good amount of written exercises and sustained writing in French and German: however, students make unnecessary errors in grammar and spelling. Students do not check their written work carefully enough: the errors students make in written work are preventing students from achieving higher standards. There are no significant variations between students of different ethnicity, background, nor ability. Most students do not have regular reading sessions. Students spend most of their time using the foreign languages in listening, speaking, reading and writing: this contributes to their literacy skills, but these are at lower levels than they would be in English. Numeracy activities have been incorporated successfully into schemes of work, and are used by teachers. At present students have limited access to computers, but enjoy using them when possible, and produce good quality work.

177. The overall quality of teaching in French and German is very good. The overall quality of teaching in French is very good. All of the lessons seen were satisfactory or better. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen. The overall quality of teaching in German is very good. All of the lessons seen were very good. In both languages the quality of teaching is improving standards: students are achieving well and making good progress.

178. In French and German teachers are proficient in the foreign language, have good accents, and project their voices clearly. They use the foreign languages for parts of the lesson to develop students' listening skills. Most use a little English to check understanding or explain grammatical points, but sometimes they use English too much. They plan a well organised sequence of activities, which involve the students in their learning. They exploit overhead projectors and other resources effectively to increase learning. Standards of discipline are good, but a few students find it difficult to concentrate sufficiently. Time is used well, and some teachers are good at encouraging oral work in pairs: this improves listening and speaking skills, and develops confidence in the students. However, some teachers should use paired work more. Staff display students' work, maps and posters, which increase the students' knowledge of the languages and countries concerned. However, more maps and display are needed in some classrooms. Students' work is assessed regularly, and results inform subsequent teaching. Useful homework, which consolidates learning, is set regularly. The teaching of those with learning difficulties is good, and meets the needs of

these students as well. Teachers manage classes well, and give students a variety of experiences in the classroom, including songs, role plays, videos and class surveys, which extend and consolidate their learning. Teachers ensure that all students make appropriate progress. They provide challenging tasks for the higher attainers, and give support to those with learning difficulties. Most students, including the higher attainers and those with learning difficulties, make good progress in lessons throughout the college. The vast majority of students behave well. They show interest in their work, sustain their concentration, and develop good study skills. Their response is usually good throughout the college. Many students show an obvious sense of enjoyment in lessons. They work well in pairs, and sometimes have opportunities to use their initiative in creating role plays and working independently. Their positive attitudes are enabling them to improve their performance. However, a few students find it difficult to concentrate and do not learn well or achieve their potential.

179. The organisation of the curriculum meets statutory requirements. The head of modern languages checks on the progress of students in French and German. The department is very well led and organised, has prioritised development plans, and works well as a team to produce resources for effective learning. The department lacks text books, readers, magazines and computer software. This inhibits teaching strategies and affects students' learning adversely. Teachers take students on visits to France and Germany: this encourages social interaction and personal responsibility, and improves language competence. The text books and other materials used, together with visits abroad, help develop awareness of the diversity and richness of other cultures. The quality of teaching, the attitudes of most students, the visits abroad, and the leadership of the head of modern languages have a positive effect on standards. However, insufficient use of paired work and of the foreign languages by some teachers, lack of resources, and the errors students make in written work are preventing students from achieving higher standards.

180. The department has made good progress on the issues raised in the previous report. The quality of teaching and learning have improved. However, more opportunities for extended reading and independent learning are still needed.

MUSIC

181. Overall, the quality of provision in music is **satisfactory**

Strengths

- Good teaching.
- Students' responses
- Relationships

Areas for development

- Below average standards
- Instrumental tuition for examination students
- Time allocation for music

182. Music in the college is currently delivered on a rotation within expressive arts. As a result, there is insufficient time to deliver the requirements of the national curriculum for music in Years 7 to 9. This arrangement has a negative effect on standards in all years. Standards currently being achieved by students in Year 9 are below average. In GCSE classes there is a considerable range of attainment with students likely to achieve high grades working alongside those who are predicted to achieve below or well below the

national average standard. Overall, standards achieved by students aged 11 are below average, but there are specific signs that indicate standards will rise if there is an increase in the allocation of teaching time due to the positive attitudes of students to the subject and the good quality teaching that they receive.

183. GCSE results have fluctuated since the previous report and entry numbers remain too low to compare results with the national results. The current Year 11 GCSE group contains students who are willing performers but there is no provision for instrumental tuition to help improve playing and performing skills. The music staff expects this group to reach expectations in their 2003 examination. There are no Year 10 music students this year.

184. Most students in Years 7 to 11 are making satisfactory progress. They work well in lessons and enjoy their work. This enthusiasm and the good quality teaching provided by the music teacher should help them gradually to raise their standards. Much opportunity is provided for students to engage in practical work, using keyboards. However, although students receive good support from the teacher, keyboard skills are overall weak owing to the limits on time and the large gap between modules. Students with learning difficulties achieve as well as other students. The majority of students in all years fully engaged in music lessons and maintain concentration well. They are beginning to understand the elements of music and can use and describe at least pitch and tempo. There is little evidence of students' awareness of staff notation.

185. Many students arrive in college with large gaps in their musical knowledge and experience. Curriculum arrangements and the time difference between modules results in students who are now in years nine reaching levels that they should have reached in Year 8. Similarly, students in Years 10 and 11 are not yet achieving as well as they might. Nevertheless their application and the well-organised lessons prepared by their teacher are now enabling them to develop awareness and understanding of music coupled with useful practical experience. In particular, all students are developing an understanding of how to use the keyboard. They understand the controls and operation of the keyboard and most are able to produce simple tunes accurately although, within each class there is significant variation in the skill displayed. Whereas some students are still at the stage of using one finger, others have developed greater dexterity. Generally, students have a satisfactory sense of rhythm but in one Year 9 lesson seen, students found it difficult to keep with a pulse. There are some opportunities for students to use ICT in lessons.

186. Teaching and learning are good overall. Lessons are well prepared and staff share the objectives of the lessons with students. The pace of lessons is purposeful and there is always a good structure that contains a mix of explanation and instruction by the teacher and practical experience for the students. Teachers intervene at appropriate stages to identify correction and improvement, to encourage students to share their work and to enable individuals to perform to the rest of the class. However, students, although polite, are reluctant to perform. In Years 7 and 8, there is an emphasis on the development of singing and in all years, opportunities for corporate music making. For example, in one Year 7 lesson seen, students sang a round in three parts with great enthusiasm. Emphasis was put on improving the quality of the singing and developing a sense of ensemble. In most lessons, students add to their log, writing briefly about their work and including self-evaluation and targets for improvement. The department makes a valuable contribution towards students' skills in literacy by giving them the opportunity to build up a glossary of key words and terms. Provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development has not yet been identified in departmental planning. However, there are many opportunities for students to play and sing together in lessons and in extra curricular activities.

187. The department is well managed within expressive arts. There has been satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection. Schemes of work have been rewritten and contain as much coverage as possible of the national curriculum including one project on African music. Teaching is now good with strong systems for on going assessment and opportunities for students to evaluate their work. The college has partly addressed the key issue from the previous report. The quality of lessons has improved and is now good, but there still remains insufficient time for delivering music and this is having a negative impact on standards in all years. The department has one qualified music teacher but lacks the support of instrumental teachers. Although purpose planned and built, the department has lost the use of some of the intended accommodation which the college, at present, is using for other purposes and this is affecting adversely affecting standards.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

188. Overall, the quality of provision in physical education is **good**

Strengths

- Good quality teaching.
- Wide range of extra-curricular activities.

Areas for development

- Limited indoor accommodation.

189. In the most recent G.C.S.E. physical education examination the number of students gaining the A* - C grades was in line with the national average, and the number of students gaining the wider A* - G grades were better than the national average. Although there were more boys than girls taking the examination there was no significant difference in their attainment.

190. Students arrive from their primary colleges bringing with them a range of physical education experiences, with many below that expected. However, with the appointment of one of the college's staff as co-ordinator for primary college physical education, the standard of students now entering the college is improving. During Years 7 to 9 students make good progress, and by the time they are 14 years old most are attaining levels of performance that are in line with national expectations. This judgement is in line with the colleges' teacher assessments. Students understand the principle of invasion games and are able to apply a set of simple rules with small-sided games. In gymnastics body management skills are developing and most students are able to demonstrate effective planning in their positioning and anticipation of movement sequences. For many students dance is a new subject but they quickly respond to the good teaching, they make good progress, and many are able to demonstrate good patterns of movement and gesture. Students understand the necessity of warm-up exercises, and have a good understanding of the safety aspects of the various activities, and apply them appropriately.

191. Students continue to make good progress throughout Years 10 and 11, and by the time they are 16 years old most students are demonstrating skills in a range of activities that are at least in line with that seen nationally and some are doing even better. Good levels of skill in performance and evaluation are developing in a range of fitness and sporting activities, and they are able to apply the skills they have practised in full game situations. Students using the excellent facilities of the local fitness centre are attaining an understanding of fitness issues and practices, with many able to devise their own personal fitness programmes. Students in the examination groups are developing understanding and expertise in both the theoretical and practical aspects of the subject. Written work is mostly

well presented with some students using their ICT skills to word process their work. Individual students and teams achieve high standards in inter-college competitions and many students have represented Sheffield in a range of sports, and a few have gone on to represent South Yorkshire. Students with special educational needs are well integrated, given much support by both teachers and fellow students, and reach standards of attainment that are commendable for them. There is no evidence of students with special educational needs being disadvantaged by the curriculum that is on offer. Talented students are encouraged to extend their skills both in college and with outside clubs.

192. The curriculum is meeting statutory requirements, and allows students to take part in a wide variety of activities. While the time allocation for the subject is generous, the time allocation for students studying for the G.C.S.E. is barely adequate for them to meet the demands of the examination syllabus. The procedures for the recording of students' attainment have been improved. Comprehensive records are now kept, and relate to National Curriculum levels of attainment. All students know what level they are working at, and what they need to do to improve. Many staff, including non-specialists, give very freely of their time to provide a wide range of extra curricular activities, which are well supported by students. Students have the opportunity to take part in water sports activity trips to the south of France and Spain.

193. The good standard of teaching reported at the previous inspections has been maintained. All lessons observed were judged to be good or very good. Teachers have a depth of knowledge that ensures that students have a solid grasp of skills and strategies. The management of the students through the use of established routines and the high expectations of the teachers is a strength of the department. Teachers are enthusiastic about their subject, and are able to pass on their own enthusiasm to their students. Most students respond very positively. They work hard, are co-operative, and are generally well behaved. Their enjoyment of the subject is very evident.

194. This is a very well led and well-managed department, with a strong ethos. Talented teachers work together effectively as a team, support each other, and share a commitment to improve the department. High quality and comprehensive documentation cover all aspects of the department's work, and help the delivery of the subject. The department has recently been awarded the Sportsmark. This is national recognition of high quality physical education provision.

195. Since the last inspection good improvement has been made. A new and comprehensive system of assessment has been introduced, and is helping raise attainment. The Junior Sports Leaders Award has been introduced to Year 10. Since the closure of the Crescent site the department has lost the use of one indoor facility, and when poor weather prevents the use of the limited indoor facilities, there is a severe shortage of suitable alternative accommodation.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

196. Overall, the quality of provision in religious education is **very good**.

Strengths.

- Good teaching by a dedicated team of teachers underpinning rising standards and effective learning.
- Efficient management promoting clear, well structured planning and provision.
- Strong leadership.
- Relevant and interesting curriculum with a good balance of knowledge, understanding and reflection.
- Climate of mutual trust and respect that gives students confidence to learn from each other as well as from their teachers.
- Well planned opportunities effectively promoting the students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Areas for improvement.

- The range of opportunities for students to develop writing skills in particular in Year 9.
- The students' independent learning.
- Marking

198. Standards are improving. The students achieve well and they learn at a good pace. The explanation lies in good teaching that is typically knowledgeable, rigorous and interesting.

199. 14 year olds are attaining levels similar to those expected of them in the local Sheffield Agreed Syllabus. They have a sound understanding of at least three major religious concepts, belief and deity. Increasingly, they recognise the principles that influence Christian lifestyle and actions. In a lesson in Year 9, for example, after watching a video extract they gave perceptive responses to what motivates a Christian to forgive in the face of tragedy inflicted on them by others. They showed a clear understanding of the meaning of forgiveness and could relate this appropriately to New Testament teaching. Attainment is strongest among higher ability students whose extended writing on the power to change shows considerable awareness of the nature of religious conversion. Even so, opportunities for developing writing skills, in particular in Year 9, are often too narrow giving rise to the only example where the students' rate of learning is slower than might be expected.

200. Standards in the GCSE short course RE are impressive with almost two thirds of the students in 2002 achieving the higher grades. This performance is well above average and the students achieve much better in RE than in most other subjects. The results show a commendable improvement over three years although girls continue to out-perform boys. The gap, however, is narrowing as results overall improve and as the support for boys' underachievement takes effect.

201. Teachers prepare students well for examination work through well structured tasks that increasingly call for evaluation, perspective and arriving at an informed view. This accounts for both boys and girls by the end of Year 11 attaining better than is expected in the local Agreed Syllabus. The students show that they have a good knowledge and understanding, for example, of a wide range of contemporary issues. Equally, they show good skills when evaluating these in the perspective of religious beliefs in both the Islamic and Christian traditions. In a lesson in Year 11, for example, on Christian teaching on divorce, the students showed good awareness of differing views and their doctrinal source in two

Christian denominations. They showed fluency in their thinking and drew effectively on their good religious vocabulary to evaluate the two positions.

202. Standards in written work by the end of Year 11 are good. They have produced well written pieces, for example, on the Designer Principle and views on Christian marriage. This work shows solid learning in theories for the existence of God and the influence of religious values on the attitudes of believers.

203. Teaching is almost always good or very good and the students learn at a good rate. Teachers have very good knowledge and understanding of the subject, set out the purpose for learning clearly and move lessons along at a good pace. In consequence, the students settle quickly to their work and know what is expected of them. Teachers demand a lot from the students who invariably rise to the challenge. In a lesson in Year 10, for example, the students showed a good level of concentration when grappling with the complexities surrounding euthanasia. The students achieved well and learning was rapid.

204. Teachers use relevant and interesting illustrations to make complex and unfamiliar religious ideas accessible. In a lesson in Year 8, for example, the teacher invited an older Muslim student to talk about her experience of prayer. The students' appreciation of the nature of the experience was greatly enhanced from the first hand description. They listened with fascination and respect. This made a significant contribution to what was learned about religious observance.

205. Care is taken by teachers to use both praise and support to build the students' confidence and inspire further effort. This is helpful, in particular, for students with learning difficulties. This was well illustrated in a class of lower ability Year 10 students who had completed a survey on religious broadcasting for homework. The teacher's effective support for individual students encouraged them to work enthusiastically and learn at a rate better than might be expected for their ability.

206. Teachers regularly help students to review their work at the end of lessons. This is usually followed up with a constructive homework task to help the students to reinforce their learning. Marking of written work is conscientious but sometimes there is insufficient information in comments to promote further progress in the subject. Assessment assignments, on the other hand, are well graded and outcomes are used appropriately in future planning. The use of ICT to support learning in RE is developing along with the teachers' confidence. There are some good examples of work by students in Year 9 using a range of ICT resources to prepare presentations on, for example, the Easter Vigil.

207. Teachers create a supportive climate of mutual trust and respect. The quality of relationships in lessons contributes significantly to the students' very good attitudes, behaviour and eagerness to learn. They gain confidence from good opportunities to discuss and form opinions although opportunities are often missed for older students, in particular, to learn independently. Meaningful reflection on the importance of beliefs and values associated with major world faiths underpins their good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Most students have a good regard for the subject and enjoy their study. They give reasons such as 'we discuss real life issues' and 'we learn to give a personal response'.

208. The department is efficiently led and managed by an experienced head of department whose commitment to her own professional development and research places her at the forefront of thinking on contemporary RE. This has a major impact on the high quality of provision and teamwork provided by a group of specialist teachers. All procedures with regard to the monitoring of students' performance and departmental practice are firmly in place and outcomes acted upon. Goals for future improvement are set with a clear sense of

direction and areas highlighted in this inspection have been well anticipated .There has been a considerable rise in standards since the last inspection in 1997 and the very good features noted then have been effectively maintained and strengthened. Developments planned for the future are likely to secure further improvements.

VOCATIONAL COURSES

209. Overall, the quality of provision in health and social care is **good**.

Strengths.

- Good teaching
- Presentation of students' folders.

Areas for improvement.

- None (small evidence base did not reveal anything)

210. In GNVQ health and social care, standards are in line with national expectations. Students' achievements are good.

211. Teaching is good. Teachers plan their lessons well ensuring that they provide students with a varied and engaging course that covers the requirements. Students respond well to the course. Their folders have evidence of assiduous note-taking that provides a good body of material for revision. Students take pride in the presentation of their folders and are particular interested in long term case studies of the physical, intellectual, emotional and social development children

LEISURE & TOURISM

212. Overall, the quality of provision in leisure and tourism is **satisfactory**.

213. Standards in the work scheme were in line with national expectations and students made satisfactory progress.

214. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Students relate well to the teacher and their behaviour is good overall. Teachers ensure that classroom management and control are fully established and a satisfactory working environment is available. Students vary in their response, some are very interested and others work at a slower pace and are not fully engaged. They describe the main element of leisure and tourism in Sheffield, capitalising them from personal experience and information gathered from their portfolios.

BUSINESS STUDIES

215. Overall, the quality of provision in business studies is **good**.

216. In the work scene, standards are below national expectations, but reflect the prior attainment of the students in the group. However, students make good progress. They are clear on how to use a word processing package and can set up a letter knowing where to enter extras like "urgent".

217. Teaching is good as is learning. The teacher builds the student's self esteem and is responsive to their needs. She explains tasks well. The group is high spirited but settles well mainly because of the teacher's non-confrontational approach.