

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **THE AXE VALLEY COMMUNITY COLLEGE**

Axminster

LEA area: Devon

Unique reference number: 113497

Headteacher: Ms E Pinfield

Reporting inspector: Mr Bob Allan  
19278

Dates of inspection: 2 – 5 December 2002

Inspection number: 252304

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE COLLEGE

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 11 to 18

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Chard St.  
Axminster  
Devon

Postcode: EX13 5EA

Telephone number: 01297 32146

Fax number: 01297 35851

Appropriate authority: Governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mr Graham Godbeer

Date of previous inspection: 12<sup>th</sup> January 1998

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
19278	Bob Allan	Registered inspector		What sort of school is it? The school's results and pupils' achievements. How well are pupils and students taught? How well is the school led and managed?
14066	Gill Hoggard	Lay inspector		Pupils' and students' attitudes, values and personal development. How well does the school care for its pupils and students? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
23268	Kevin Corrigan	Team inspector	Physical education	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils and students?
23588	Charanjit Ajitsingh	Team inspector	English (including sixth form)	
18967	Brenda Loydell	Team inspector	Mathematics (including sixth form)	
30563	Jackie Pentlow	Team inspector	Science; biology (sixth form)	
18261	Tony Hill	Team inspector	Art (including sixth form)	
8501	Paul Hartwright	Team inspector	Design and technology	
23324	Sylvia Greenland	Team inspector	Geography; citizenship; sociology (sixth form)	
20716	Reg Grogan	Team inspector	History; religious education	
8052	Ken McKenzie	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	
12408	Alan Frith	Team inspector	French; German	
30599	Tim Cain	Team inspector	Music	

28002	Sue Taylor	Team inspector	Special educational needs	
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London WC2B 6SE

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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE COLLEGE**

The Axe Valley Community College is a smaller than average, but growing, comprehensive school for pupils aged 11 to 18. Few pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds and there are none for whom English is an additional language. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is broadly average, although a significant proportion of pupils come from families with low incomes. Fourteen percent of pupils have been identified with special educational needs. The main categories catered for are: pupils with weak literacy; emotional or behavioural difficulties; specific or moderate learning difficulties; physical disabilities. The proportion of pupils with statements of special educational need is above average. Overall attainment on entry has risen in the last three years and is now close to average. The proportion of higher-attaining pupils in the college is very low, the result of selection by the local grammar school.

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

The Axe Valley Community College is a good school with many strong features and provides satisfactory value for money. The great majority of pupils make good progress as a result of good teaching and achieve standards close to the national average at GCSE. The quality of leadership and management shown by the headteacher and many senior, subject and other managers is good. Staff successfully strive to ensure that all pupils benefit from the college's provision.

#### **What the college does well**

- Good teaching ensures that the great majority of pupils achieve well.
- Strong leadership by the headteacher and purposeful direction by the governing body has led to the significant expansion of the college.
- Teachers and teaching assistants provide good support for pupils with special educational needs.
- Relationships between the staff and pupils are very good.
- Strenuous steps are taken to enable all pupils to participate in the college community.
- Good personal care and guidance helps pupils to do well.

#### **What could be improved**

- The impact of good teaching is hindered by irregular attendance, particularly in Year 10, Year 11 and the sixth form.
- Increase the effectiveness of pupils' learning by improved use of target setting and monitoring.
- Improve provision in those subjects where currently it is only satisfactory.
- Refine procedures for managing the growing college and ensure they are consistently followed.

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

### **HOW THE COLLEGE HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION**

The college was last inspected in 1998, since when it has made good progress in raising standards and dealing with areas of weakness. Test and examination results have improved at a rate above that found nationally, although there was a slight decline at GCSE in 2002. Standards in French have risen, as have those in information and communication technology (ICT) although less so where ICT is used in other subjects. The quality of teaching has improved and the gap in standards between boys and girls has shrunk. The college has successfully established a new sixth form in which students achieve well. Strong leadership gives the college the capacity to improve further.

## STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 11 based on average points scores in GCSE examinations. The establishment of the sixth form is too recent for comparisons to be made.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	2000	2001	2002	2002
GCSE examinations	C	C	D	C
A Levels/AS Levels	-	-	*	

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

\* At the time of publication of this report, the national statistics for A/AS Level examinations were not available. Hence, a comparison of the college's results could not be made; however, the results indicated good achievement.

Standards of work seen during the inspection were broadly average. Pupils are making good progress and doing better than pupils nationally who have similar prior attainment. Current standards reflect the results of recent tests and examinations and confirm the steadily rising trend since the last inspection. The college GCSE results match its targets well, although in 2002, boys' results fell below those expected of them. Future targets reflect the college's high expectations and the rising standards of pupils entering the college.

Results of the national tests for Year 9 pupils in 2002 were average in English, mathematics and science with a high proportion of pupils reaching the expected levels in English and mathematics. This was an improvement from the previous year. Pupils' results compare closely with those in schools in which a similar proportion of pupils take free school meals; however, considering the low numbers of high attaining pupils in the year group when they entered the college, these results represent good progress. Results have been improving at a faster rate than schools nationally. The standards evident in work seen during the inspection reflect this and are in line with the college's targets.

GCSE results fell in 2002 to below average after steady improvements in recent years to a position close to the national average. These results were largely as expected based on the pupils' attainment when they entered the college. The poor performance of a small but significant minority of mainly boys, whose attendance rates were very low, contributed substantially to these poor overall results and the generally poorer performance of boys. Girls' results were broadly in line with those expected of them. This pattern was evident widely, with boys doing better than girls only in design and technology.

The first set of A Level results in 2002 indicated good progress by students from their GCSE results. The poor attendance of a few students prevented them from making better progress. Students following vocational courses attained results in line with their targets. Work seen during the inspection shows standards to be rising. Standards of work in art are very good.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the college	Pupils are enthusiastic and generally enjoy their experience at the college. Increasing numbers are staying on into the sixth form, where students are well motivated and invest considerable effort in order to master new concepts.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is often very good both around college and in lessons, with few lapses.



Personal development and relationships	Pupils develop well, with many keen to take responsibility. Very good relationships are a particular strength of the college.
Attendance	Attendance is below average. The poor attendance of some pupils, particularly in Years 10 and 11, hampers their progress. Poor punctuality by pupils delays the start of some lessons.

Most pupils work harmoniously together, in lessons and elsewhere in the college. They co-operate well and enjoy extra-curricular activities such as sport and music. Recent action to improve attendance has not yet proved effective.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Years 7 – 9	Years 10 – 11	Years 12 – 13
Quality of teaching	Good	Good	Very good

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

In the great majority of lessons, teachers demonstrate a good grasp of their subject and the demands of the courses and programmes that they teach. Their planning is thorough; they manage pupils well and establish very good relationships with them. As a result, pupils concentrate well, work purposefully at a good pace and learn well. This is particularly so in the sixth form. In the best lessons, teachers have high expectations, beginning with a brisk introduction, punctuating the main teaching with questions that make pupils think carefully, and drawing the lesson to a focused conclusion. Where teaching is weaker, it fails to capture the interest of pupils so that they work at a slow pace, become inattentive or misbehave. In the very few unsatisfactory lessons, this misbehaviour is not managed effectively and the learning of other pupils is hampered.

Specialist teaching is good in English, mathematics, science and ICT throughout the college. Literacy is well taught in most subjects where teachers place emphasis on pupils' correct use of important words and phrases. Numeracy is well taught in mathematics and is satisfactory in other subjects. ICT is well taught in specialist lessons but teachers in other subjects do not generally use or build on pupils' skills in this area. The teaching of pupils who have special educational needs is good; knowledgeable assistants support teaching well. Whilst teaching in design and technology is satisfactory, expectations of pupils' design work is not sufficiently high for them to make such good progress as in other subjects, where teaching is good.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE COLLEGE

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum provides a basis for good progress from primary school work and develops well to offer work-related alternatives for older pupils. It is very good in the sixth form, in collaboration with a local grammar school.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	These pupils have very good access to the main curriculum, but assessment of their progress is not sufficiently precise.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Provision for the pupils' personal development is good overall. Social development is promoted particularly well and there is good provision for the pupils' moral development. Satisfactory provision is made for pupils' spiritual and cultural development.
How well the college cares for its pupils	Pupils are well cared for. There are very good procedures for eliminating oppressive behaviour. Educational support and guidance is good.

National Curriculum requirements are met with the exception of religious education in the sixth form. ICT is not taught sufficiently in other subjects. Particular strengths in the main college curriculum are its consistently good quality, a high degree of equality of opportunity, particularly so in the sixth form, and the good range of extra-curricular activities. The sixth form curriculum has excellent links between the courses offered and students' preferences and is enriched by successful collaboration with the local grammar school.

Overall, college links with parents are satisfactory. The college works well with those parents who respond to the good information about their children's progress and the college's performance.

## HOW WELL THE COLLEGE IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher and the senior team constitute a strong management group. The headteacher provides very good leadership, firmly set towards further improvements in standards without jeopardising the supportive ethos of the college.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Overall, the governing body fulfils its responsibilities well, giving firm direction to initiatives such as the foundation of the sixth form and moves towards specialist college status.
The college's evaluation of its performance	The college evaluates its own performance very well overall. As a result, measures can be taken to redress emerging problems in good time.
The strategic use of resources	The budget is well planned over the current year and projected for following years in outline. Funds for special educational needs are used effectively, although the reconciliation of income and expenditure in this area lacks clarity.

Overall, there is a strong, shared commitment to raising standards. As the college has expanded, it has been necessary to adapt the roles and responsibilities within management teams. This has been done successfully whilst maintaining good working relations within the college. The college applies the principles of best value well. It is well staffed; accommodation is adequate but reliant upon a high proportion of temporary classrooms; resources for learning are good.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE COLLEGE

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff have high expectations of their children</li> <li>• The progress that their children are making, including those with special educational needs</li> <li>• The strong leadership of the headteacher</li> <li>• They find staff very approachable and caring</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The quality and quantity of homework</li> <li>• The closeness with which the college works with parents</li> <li>• Many parents present at the pre-inspection meeting were very pleased with the contacts that they had with the college and the information that they received but a minority of those responding to the questionnaire felt less well-informed.</li> </ul>

The inspection team shares the positive views expressed by parents and to some extent their concerns. Inspectors found that some teachers did not always follow the homework timetable and that some of the work comprises trivial tasks that require very modest effort. The inspectors found that the college made clear efforts to consult parents and keep them informed but that some of the steps taken were not effective, bringing only limited response.

## ANNEX: THE SIXTH FORM

## THE AXE VALLEY COMMUNITY COLLEGE

### INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

The sixth form was opened in 2000. It is small in size but growing, with 91 students. In both years, there is a greater difference between the proportions of female and male students than found nationally. There are no students from minority ethnic backgrounds. There is a good range of courses on offer. The most popular of these are studied in the college. In those courses for which only a few students register, the college uses video conferencing links or offers courses collaboratively with the local grammar school. Most students join the sixth form from Year 11, with a small number coming from other schools. In the main, students following A Level courses have five or more A\*-C grades at GCSE but the college operated a very open entry policy, responding very well to students' aspirations. The college retained a high proportion of its first sixth form students into Year 13.

### HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

A good, cost effective sixth form has been established in a short period of time. The first A Level results in 2002 showed almost all students had made good progress and achieved well in relation to their earlier GCSE results. Teaching is very good overall and consequently standards are rising. The sixth form is well led and managed. Students have very positive views of the sixth form and it provides very well for their aptitudes and interests.

#### Strengths

- Teaching is very good.
- Provision for art is very good.
- Relations between staff and students are very good.
- There is outstanding equality of access to a wide range of relevant courses.
- Tutors and teachers provide very good personal and academic support and guidance.
- There is very productive collaboration with the local grammar school.
- Effective leadership and management have established a successful sixth form.

#### What could be improved

- Attendance is unsatisfactory and contributes to some students not achieving as well as they should.
- Cramped study facilities hamper independent learning.
- More comprehensive religious education should be provided for all students.

*The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan. Strengths and areas for improvement in individual subjects are identified in the sections on individual subjects in the full report.*

### THE QUALITY OF PROVISION IN INDIVIDUAL CURRICULUM AREAS

The table below shows overall judgements about the provision in the subjects and courses that were inspected in the sixth form. Judgements are based mainly on the quality of teaching and learning and how well students achieve. Not all subjects in the sixth form were inspected.

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Mathematics	<b>Good.</b> A Level results in 2002 show students to have made good progress from GCSE. Those now in Year 13 benefit from very good teaching in collaboration with the local grammar school and are achieving very well.
Biology	<b>Good.</b> There are as yet no A Level results as this is a new course. Good teaching, with some very good features, offers good challenge to the students who are making good progress.
Art	<b>Very good.</b> Standards of work on A Level courses are above national expectations. The

	department benefits from the very good leadership of a strong team of teachers whose quality of teaching is very good.
<b>Curriculum area</b>	<b>Overall judgement about provision, with comment</b>
Sociology	<b>Good.</b> Standards are in line with national expectations. A Level results show students to have made good progress from GCSE. Good teaching and positive students' attitudes are resulting in good achievement.
English	<b>Very good.</b> Standards are in line with national expectations and students are achieving well in response to very good teaching.

Overall, standards of work seen in other subjects show that students make good progress and achieve standards above those expected on the basis of their GCSE results. Very good teaching was seen in French, history, geography, business studies, psychology, leisure and recreation and environmental science. Good teaching was seen in drama, law, manufacturing, health & social care and ICT. Music teaching seen was satisfactory.

### OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Tutors and teachers support students very well. Individual guidance that helps students develop skills of independent learning is a particular strength. Procedures for promoting good attendance are not sufficiently effective.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	The new sixth form is well led and managed and has clear and purposeful direction. Imaginative planning and the use of out-of-college resources ensure students are provided with outstanding opportunities, whatever their interests or circumstances.

### STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

What students like about the sixth form	What they feel could be improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They are helped to settle into sixth form life and work well.</li> <li>• They find teachers very accessible when help is needed.</li> <li>• They enjoy teaching that they find interesting and challenging.</li> <li>• They find the information on their progress very useful.</li> <li>• They value help that enables them to work independently and carry out research.</li> <li>• Most feel that they are treated as mature young adults and enjoy very good relationships in the college.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They feel that there is limited accommodation for independent study.</li> <li>• They would like a wider range of enrichment activities.</li> <li>• Some would like to see greater account taken of their views.</li> </ul>

Inspectors found good evidence to support the positive comments made by sixth form students and for their concerns. Facilities for private study are limited but improvements are in hand. There is a good main college programme of extra-curricular activities that is being supplemented with some that take account of sixth formers' interests. Students' views are sought on many issues but they do not always know why decisions are taken.

### COMPARING PROVISION IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

*Inspectors make judgements about provision in subjects and courses, and about leadership and management, in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. Excellent and very good are equivalent to the judgement “outstanding” in further education and sixth form college reports; poor and very poor are equivalent to “very weak”.*

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

#### **The college's results and pupils' and students' achievements**

1. Attainment on entry has risen in the last three years and is now close to average. For most pupils in Years 10 and 11, their attainment on entry was clearly below average. The proportion of higher-attaining pupils is low because between 20% and 25% of pupils in the area are selected for the local grammar school.
2. National test results for Year 9 pupils have been rising faster than the national trend and were average overall in 2002. The proportions of pupils attaining the expected levels in English and mathematics were above average. These are higher standards than in 2001 when the year group as a whole was not so capable. A smaller than average proportion of pupils reached the highest levels as the college has fewer higher-attaining pupils than typical comprehensive schools. Hence, comparisons with other schools' results lack validity; however, in relation to their attainment on entry, the progress made by those pupils who took the tests in 2002 was good, as it was in 2001.
3. In GCSE examinations in 2002, the college's results were below the national average and below the levels expected on the basis of pupils' earlier Year 9 test results. These results ran contrary to the sustained and improving trend in recent years. Analysis of data shows that a small but significant number of pupils, predominantly boys, performed significantly below the levels expected of them. The college identified pupils not performing to expectations well before the end of Year 11 and made extra provision to improve their performance including additional teaching and after-school lessons. In 2001, the proportion of pupils attaining five or more grades of A\*-C was in line with the national average and above the average for similar schools. This shows the good progress made by these pupils during their time in the college. The small proportion of pupils attaining A\* or A grades reflects attainment on entry and explains the below average points scores. The proportion of pupils who attained five or more A\*-G grades was average and comparable with similar schools. When the results of a small number of pupils with special educational needs who entered the college in a year group below that of their chronological age are taken into account, the proportion attaining at least one GCSE grade of A\*-G was also close to the national average. In geography, pupils achieved better than their results in other subjects; in art and design and history, their results were below their averages in other subjects. Over the last five years, the college's results have risen at a faster rate than nationally.
4. The college achieves its targets, which are realistic and offer sufficient challenge. Even in 2002 when results were low and boys did not meet general targets, girls' results were better and so pupils' average total points score was close to that for which the college was aiming. In each of the four years up to 2000, although girls' performance was better than that of boys, the gap was closing steadily so that by 2001 it was not significant. Those pupils who attend regularly achieve well, taking full advantage of good teaching; however, overall attendance in Year 11 is unsatisfactory so despite good teaching, progress generally is satisfactory rather than good.
5. In English, mathematics and science, pupils currently in Year 9 who entered the college with below average standards have made good progress. In these subjects, they are now attaining average standards. In English, by Year 11 pupils have made good progress since entering the college with below average standards; many pupils have extended the range of their writing, but weaknesses in spelling, punctuation and grammar persist. Similarly in mathematics and science, Year 11, pupils have made good progress since Year 7; their attainment is average. Pupils are taught well in the well-managed core subjects so that generally they make good progress; however, in Years 10 and 11, irregular attendance hampers the progress of some pupils so that overall attainment remains average.
6. Pupils achieve well in ICT, and standards are above average by Year 9. In art, modern languages, physical education (PE) and citizenship, pupils' attainment is average and their achievement good. Pupils are making good progress in history and geography, although there has been insufficient time for the recent improvements to take full effect; their current standards are below average and rising. In

design & technology (DT), religious education (RE) and music teaching is satisfactory, as is pupils' progress, so standards remain below average, as they were when pupils entered the college.

7. Current Year 11 pupils are making good progress to reach average standards in art, geography, physical education, citizenship and religious education. In ICT and modern languages, standards are average and pupils are making satisfactory progress. In music and design and technology, pupils progress at a satisfactory rate, standards remaining below average. Whilst standards in history are below average, pupils are making good progress from their former low attainment.
8. Standards in both literacy and numeracy rise from below average to be broadly in line with national expectations by the end of Year 9. Speaking and listening, reading and writing are practised in most subjects, especially in English. Drama makes a good contribution to speaking, listening and reading skills. The latest guidance on teaching literacy has been incorporated into schemes of work in most subjects but is not yet consistently applied. In mathematics, current strategies for teaching numeracy are being well used to raise standards. Many departments are contributing to raising standards of numeracy such as ICT, geography, science and modern languages although generally, developments are at an early stage. ICT skills are above expectation by the end of Year 9 and are applied well in science, physical education, art and in the teaching of pupils with special educational needs, but not sufficiently exploited in mathematics, modern languages and religious education.
9. Pupils with special educational needs are making good progress in their lessons and in withdrawal groups. Those who are withdrawn for extra literacy help make very good gains with their reading ages, for example most pupils have made from 5 months' to 3 years' increase in the 5 months they have been receiving extra help. One pupil who has a statement of special educational need has made substantial gains in learning in mathematics lessons, improving by two National Curriculum levels in 6 months. Data on pupils' attainment when they join the college is used effectively to identify those with special educational needs and to make provision for them; however, the data is not used well to write specific targets for individual education plans. These are not sufficiently clear to help match teaching methods and resources or to provide adequate means by which progress can be rigorously monitored.
10. There are no pupils in the college for whom English is an additional language. Pupils who have been identified as gifted and talented are making the same good progress as their peers; however, entry assessment data is not used to identify them, to provide challenging targets or to ensure that they have work that stretches them. There has been some recent identification of these pupils within subject areas where individual teachers make provision which varies in quality from subject to subject.

## **Sixth form**

11. The first A Level results were achieved in 2002. There were no national statistics available at the time of the inspection so it is not possible to make any comparison with the national average; however, some subjects performed well, with high grades (A or B) in Business (Vocational), English literature, communication studies and sociology. Although four out of five students achieved a pass grade in music technology, these were all at a low level (grade E). Female students' results were better than those of male students, none of whom attained a high grade. Considering their GCSE results at the start of the sixth form, students' made good progress.
12. In AS Level examinations accredited in 2002, each of the thirteen students achieved at least one pass; those studying photography performed very well. There is a good retention rate, with almost all students continuing onto A Level courses in Year 13. A small number of students followed intermediate GNVQ courses in leisure and tourism and manufacturing. The majority achieved well, with half gaining merits in both courses.
13. English literature, mathematics, biology, art and sociology were inspected, and improving standards were evident in the work of students. Very good work was seen in art. High standards in research and preliminary studies contribute well to the high quality of creative work produced. Standards in mathematics are in line with expectations based on GCSE results. Standards in statistics are higher than in mechanics, which students find most difficult. Students overcome difficulties with calculus to achieve sound results in pure mathematics. In English literature, standards are in line with expectations

and rising. Standards in AS Level sociology are in line with expectations and an increasing number of students are following the course. Standards in biology are low but as students with low levels of prior attainment are recruited and well supported, they make good progress.

14. A small number of students were accredited with key skills in 2002, those in communication at a high level. Overall, students have satisfactory levels of competence in communication, ICT and numeracy so that they are able to make good progress in their studies.
15. Overall, good progress is made by the very small number of pupils with identified special educational needs in the sixth form because individualised work is provided.

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

16. Pupils' attitudes to college are good and they show enthusiasm for learning. The high standards found at the time of the last inspection have been maintained. Many pupils say how much they enjoy coming to college and an increasing number are staying on after Year 11. Extra-curricular clubs such as football and drama are popular and well attended. At lunchtime for example, some Year 8 pupils voluntarily joined a music coaching activity: they were highly motivated and rose well to the challenge of playing a piece of music all the way through.
17. Behaviour in and around college is also good, with a few lapses. Behaviour in lessons is often very good. For example, in a Year 7 girls' gymnastics lesson, pupils worked hard and cheerfully, paying close attention to their teacher. Year 9 pupils were very enthusiastic in a sequence of different modern languages activities, eagerly moving on to the next task. In corridors, pupils hold doors open for each other and for visitors and move sensibly between lessons, despite some overcrowding, and remain good-humoured. A few pupils dawdle between lessons, preventing prompt starts. In a few cases, classroom behaviour is less than satisfactory: small groups of pupils can be noisy and cheeky, especially, but not exclusively boys. Such behaviour usually arises when the teacher fails to challenge poor conduct when it first occurs. The level of exclusions is about average for this size of college.
18. Caring and supportive relationships are a particular strength of the college. Pupils and parents regard staff as friendly and approachable. Pupils with special educational needs are well integrated into the life of the college. They have positive attitudes towards college, and those in withdrawal groups for literacy behave very well. Pupils' personal development is good. They learn increasingly to reflect on how their actions affect others. For example, pupils work well together to evaluate each other's achievements. In general they show respect for their peers and teachers. Pupils are keen to take responsibility and show initiative. They help with refreshments at parents' evening or undertake various duties around the college as prefects in Year 11. The head boy and head girl and their deputies show exemplary pride and maturity in representing the college.
19. One shortcoming is that attendance is unsatisfactory: it is close to the bottom 25% of schools nationally. There is little sense of urgency about arriving at registration or lessons on time. For those pupils whose attendance is poor, attainment suffers and they fall short of the levels of which they are capable.

### **Sixth form**

20. Attitudes and behaviour in the sixth form are good. Students say they greatly enjoy sixth form life. They are enthusiastic and comment very favourably on the help and encouragement they receive from staff. Their induction into the sixth form is thorough, ensuring that the vast majority feel they are on the right courses. In most lessons attitudes are positive: for example, Year 12 girls in a health and social care class worked well together and were enthusiastic to demonstrate practical first-aid manoeuvres. Students are able to work well independently, for example on the computers set aside for sixth form private study. Behaviour in lessons is usually very good and sometimes excellent. For example, Year 13 art students looking at photography in public spaces were mature, committed and independent. Students are keen and have made a positive choice to join the sixth form.



21. Opportunities for personal development are very good; however, early in Year 12, students experience difficulties adjusting to the greater demands on them for planning their own study time. Staff have identified this, using their own consultation procedures and are seeking to improve the already good induction programme. There are enrichment activities that provide students with a sense of service to the college community. For example, they can train, then work as mentors with Year 9 pupils on the sex education programme; work with mentally handicapped adults in the Gateway Club; or work as a volunteer on a social service project. It is also possible for sixth formers to take a Community Sports Leadership Award. These options had not been established when students replied to the questionnaire. At that time over a third indicated they were not happy with the extra-curricular activities on offer. Relationships are mostly very good at sixth form level, both between students and with the staff. Many cite this as one of the reasons they enjoy coming to college, although a few students in conversation and in the questionnaire suggested that not all staff are ready to treat them as adults.
22. Attendance in the sixth form is not satisfactory, particularly in the upper sixth. Students do not always come to college when they do not have lessons and are casual about signing themselves in and out.

### **HOW WELL ARE PUPILS AND STUDENTS TAUGHT?**

23. Teaching in Years 7 to 11 is good and very good in the sixth form. Teaching has improved since the time of the last inspection when 90% of lessons were found to be at least satisfactory and about a half to have been good or better.
24. Teaching in Years 7 to 9 is good, with very good features and few weaknesses. The strongest teaching, with a significant proportion of very good and no unsatisfactory teaching, is to be found in English, modern languages, ICT and physical education. Teaching is satisfactory or good in all other subjects, although small elements of unsatisfactory teaching were found in mathematics, German, geography, design and technology and religious education.
25. The teaching is good in Years 10 and 11. Some outstanding teaching was seen in geography and physical education with very good teaching found in English, mathematics, science, ICT, modern languages and art.
26. Almost all teaching effectively promotes good learning. In the great majority of lessons, teachers use their wide knowledge of the subject and the test or examination requirements well. They develop productive relationships with pupils, plan lessons well, employ a mixture of methods and manage pupils' behaviour sensitively. As a result, in most lessons, pupils' interest is captured, they invest effort and concentrate well in order to make good progress. Literacy is well taught in English and most subjects where emphasis is placed on important vocabulary. The teaching of numeracy across subjects other than mathematics is in the early stages of development following recent training. Science, geography, modern languages and physical education are leading the way. ICT is well taught in specialist lessons but it is not sufficiently utilised in other subjects.
27. In Years 7 to 9, teachers use praise well which stimulates widespread participation in lessons, as well as directing pupils towards the best practice. In these years, some teachers are careful to establish very good routines that provide pupils with a disciplined framework within which to work. In French and German, for example, this works very well so that lessons are very efficiently run at the same time as showing pupils how to take responsibility and learn independently. In some lessons in science, design and technology and modern languages for example, homework is set early. This helps pupils to understand exactly what is expected of them, and where necessary, teaching assistants can ensure that pupils with special educational needs are sufficiently well prepared. Safe practices are emphasised in science without loss of either the necessary rigour or good relations with pupils.
28. In Years 10 and 11, very good specialist knowledge enables teachers to prepare stimulating activities from which pupils learn well. By using a framework for the analysis of poetry in English, pupils learned how to meet examination requirements efficiently. Working through a well-researched graphing activity, pupils gained a deeper understanding of suburbanisation in local geographical studies. Referring to imaginative resources, the teacher reinforced the use of past tense through a discussion of earlier holidays, leading to pupils' authentic use of German. Teachers use questioning very well to assess pupils' learning. In this way, teachers maintain a brisk and challenging pace by moving on as soon as

pupils are judged to have the capacity to complete work at a later time. It also allows them to anticipate emerging misunderstandings and make timely interventions to deal with them.

29. The very small amount of unsatisfactory teaching is characterised by a lack of clarity in objectives, insufficiently challenging activities that fail to capture pupils' interest and a slow pace. This sometimes contributes to rising disruptive behaviour by a small proportion of pupils that some teachers find very difficult to manage. In these cases, the rate of progress made by most pupils slackens and falls short of that of which pupils would otherwise be capable.
30. When pupils miss work through absence, teachers often take special care to provide additional support so that the impact on their learning is lessened; however, particularly in Years 10 and 11, attendance falls below the levels at which very good progress can be sustained. Those pupils whose attendance is clearly less than satisfactory, do not gain the benefits from the generally very good teaching that would otherwise enable them to achieve very well.
31. Pupils with special educational needs are usually taught with their class group but are sometimes withdrawn for specific work on their literacy skills. Teaching in lessons is good and meets the needs of these pupils because teachers know the pupils well and teach them in groups of similar prior attainment. The learning support staff work effectively with pupils and are allocated according to identified needs. They are very well informed and work well as a team to ensure that pupils' needs are met. They provide a good blend of help and challenge which encourages pupils to work independently. The learning support staff are very aware of the progress pupils make over time. Pupils in small literacy groups are taught well. There is satisfactory liaison between learning support staff and subject teachers; however, subject teachers provide insufficient individualised work for pupils with specific needs, relying heavily on teaching assistants to provide this. Pupils' individual education plans do not contain sufficiently clear targets or strategies to enable subject staff to meet pupils' needs more closely or plan for their needs specifically.

## **Sixth form**

32. Teaching in the sixth form is very good. Students respond to the challenges that it offers very well so that they learn very effectively and make very good progress. Teaching is very good in English, mathematics and art. It is good in biology and sociology. Very good teaching was seen in French, psychology, leisure and recreation, geography and history. During the inspection, over four-fifths of the teaching seen was very good. Consequently, students become engrossed in their studies, make substantial efforts and achieve well.
33. Teachers have a very good knowledge of their specialist subjects and the requirements of the examinations. They use this to good effect in order that students come to understand well how they can reach high standards. In art, students are taught to make critical evaluations of their own work as it develops, enabling them to match it closely to assessment criteria without sacrifice of creative talent. In English, students are expected to think independently, substantiating their views with references to the text.
34. Teachers plan work very carefully so that they can use time very efficiently, meeting several objectives simultaneously. In French, students discuss social and environmental conditions in the European Union. This challenges them to apply number skills and develop their understanding of issues of citizenship whilst refining their use of the target language. In psychology, although focusing on teaching research methods, students were regularly called upon to cite references from studies and experiments that they had studied earlier.
35. By asking probing questions, teachers demand that students think for themselves so that they can work independently. This is evident in many lessons: in analysis of the Reagan presidency in history; comparing and contrasting urban development in UK cities and those elsewhere in the world in geography; and in expanding on students' initial responses in science.
36. By making strong links with real-life examples, teachers expect students to set their theoretical knowledge in context, further deepening their understanding. In a mathematics lesson, students were called on to analyse different problems derived from practical situations and textbook exercises. As a

result, students acquired knowledge of the statistical processes as well as the limitations to their application.

37. In all lessons seen, relationships between teachers and students and between students were very good. In photography, students worked well together in groups, critically evaluating each other's work in a mature, professional and creatively stimulating way.

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

38. The quality and range of learning opportunities for pupils at the college is good overall with very good provision in Years 10 and 11 for those pupils for whom GCSE courses are not always the most appropriate. These pupils are offered national vocational qualifications (NVQs) at the local further education college which provide a relevant pathway for them into employment or onto further vocational courses. There are now impressive plans for extending this additional curriculum provision into other relevant courses for these pupils. Pupils are also able to choose from a broad range of courses which ensures their differing talents can be accommodated. There is particularly good curriculum provision in art, where pupils are able to work in a range of media with professional artists. The time allocation is sufficient to meet the needs of all subjects, although religious education has an insufficient allocation of time in Years 7 to 9 to cover the subject in appropriate depth. This reservation apart, the curriculum is broad and balanced throughout the college. All statutory requirements are met.
39. The strategies for teaching literacy are included in most subjects and feature in the planning of many lessons but not yet consistently across the college. Numeracy is being developed across the whole curriculum but is at an early stage. It features well in geography, science, modern languages and physical education. Current provision is not consistently monitored or developed across all departments. Provision for ICT across the curriculum varies too widely. It is good in some subjects, notably science, physical education and art but it is given insufficient prominence in others, such as mathematics, modern languages. There is insufficient ICT in religious education as a result of the limited time allocated for the subject overall.
40. Provision for pupils' personal, social and health education (PSHE) is good. Information and advice on careers is offered in Year 9 and all pupils take part in work experience in Year 10. Health education, decision-making and study skills are also taught, and areas of citizenship such as prejudice and community studies, that are not covered by the cross-curricular provision in Years 7 to 9, are included. The college has extensive links with local business and the wider community. Pupils benefit from the additional expertise this brings to the college. For example, a police liaison officer led a Year 7 lesson on young people and the law.
41. Extra-curricular provision is good. The college provides pupils with many opportunities to extend their knowledge, understanding and participation outside normal lessons. The college provides a wide range of open access clubs, activities and teams in sport, art, drama and music but participation in these is often limited to pupils who live nearby and those who can arrange transport to outlying communities. The physical education department has achieved the Sportsmark award that recognises the level of participation of pupils. There are numerous visits and activities provided in a range of subjects, for example in geography and modern foreign languages.
42. Pupils with special educational needs have access to the same curriculum as other pupils. They are sometimes withdrawn for specific teaching on literacy, but care is taken that this does not deny them access to a broad and balanced curriculum. The college identifies gifted and talented pupils but they are not routinely provided with additional challenge in lessons.
43. The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral and social and cultural development is good. The college has made great strides in raising the aspirations of pupils and developing an awareness of a set of values, principles and beliefs which informs their perspectives on life and their positive behaviour. Issues of morality are planned within lessons, for example in distinguishing right from wrong whilst studying plays and stories in the context of *Frankenstein* in English, or issues of 'fair play' in physical education

lessons. The provision for pupils' social development is very good and a major strength of the college. Staff know pupils very well, and in developing firm but friendly relationships with pupils they promote a strong sense of community and self-worth. Teachers emphasise the importance of co-operative work in groups and insist on pupils showing respect for each other's contributions. The provision for pupils' moral development is good. All subjects play a prominent role by exploring moral themes and promoting moral values. For example, in physical education, the principles of fair play are consistently emphasised; in an English lesson, pupils explored the moral issues associated with cloning very well.

44. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory. Although there is no act of collective worship, religious education lessons do make a positive contribution to pupils' spiritual development. The provision for pupils' cultural development is satisfactory. Some subjects exhibit a good awareness and development of this theme, for example in physical education, geography, religious education and science where it is embedded in the work of the departments; however, this is not a prominent feature of the college's development of cross-curricular themes. There is little understanding by pupils of the United Kingdom as a multi-cultural society.

## **Sixth form**

45. The quality and range of courses in the sixth form is very good and provides an excellent match with students' aspirations and potential. Parents consider that the provision offered by the college is a very good alternative to employment or study at other institutions. The college makes every effort to find out what students want, for example through well-planned open evenings. Information gathered on students' preferences is used to plan the curriculum accordingly. With the very good liaison with the local grammar school and use of video links, the college is able to provide a wide range of vocational and academic courses, including GNVQs and A Levels, which meet the needs of all students and builds on their prior attainment. Without this, courses for students where numbers are currently small, for example in A Level sports studies and mathematics, would be hard to sustain. Those students who have special educational needs have access to the same range of courses and activities as others. Sixth form students also follow a programme of tutor-led study for one period each week which covers human rights, environmental issues and democracy as well as revision skills. The college offers the Community Sports Leadership Award. This provides students with an excellent opportunity to develop their personal, social and leadership skills.
46. A good range of extra-curricular activities are offered, particularly in sport and the performing arts, but many students think that there are insufficient opportunities offered in other areas. The college does not meet the requirements for the provision of religious education in the sixth form although students participate in an annual day of reflection which gives them a very good opportunity to learn and discuss spiritual, cultural and religious issues.

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

47. The college has good procedures through which the support and welfare of pupils are taken seriously. It has maintained the high standards found at the time of the last inspection. Child protection procedures are satisfactory. Staff work closely together and their good knowledge of pupils means that concerns are quickly detected and dealt with, but not all pastoral staff are aware of the recommended route for referrals. Most pupils feel there is someone in whom they can confide. Due attention is paid to matters of health and safety, including safe working practices in practical subjects. Some daily routines need attention: the canteen is overcrowded, there are few places to sit outside and little protection from bad weather. The college recognises the need for better facilities for pupils as it expands.
48. There are particular strengths in the good personal relationships and the staff's knowledge of each pupil, which parents and carers appreciate very much. A thorough induction programme for Year 7 smoothes the path into secondary education, and pupils are treated with respect and consideration. Support for children with special needs is good. Some help is offered to pupils who experience difficulty with work, largely through departments, although there are not always enough suitably challenging activities for the more able pupils. Pupils are, however, well guided and supported through option choices for GCSE and the sixth form, and parents and carers are consulted. Very good continuing guidance is given on careers in a format appropriate to the age group. Tutorial time is also used to address pastoral matters. In the

best examples, tutors plan sessions carefully to link with themes of citizenship, guide pupils and monitor their progress, but in some cases pupils simply chat or arrive so late there is little time for anything except the register.

49. The management of behaviour is generally good, although with some inconsistencies in practice. For good behaviour and achievement, there are positive incident reports, certificates and letters home from heads of year; a graduated system of reports is used to track the behaviour of those causing concern, although there are some inconsistencies between different years and individual teachers manage behaviour in different ways. This can mean, for example, that pupils behave well in one subject but badly in another.
50. The procedures for monitoring attendance are satisfactory. The recent appointment of a new educational welfare officer and more emphasis by the college on attendance is slowly beginning to have a beneficial impact. Some year heads give rewards to those with good attendance but there are inconsistencies in practice. Not all tutors are equally rigorous in taking registration, or arriving on time themselves, and not enough is yet done consistently to encourage and support good attendance - for example by comparing attendance in different tutor groups or utilising rewards, incentives, competitions and wall displays.
51. The college's assessment and monitoring of pupils' academic performance is good overall and is used well to guide planning and improve achievement. Marking is good overall, but it varies from being very good in art and PE, to satisfactory in music, geography and design technology. Where marking is good, pupils know the levels or grades they are working at, their target grade or level and what they need to do to improve. The assessment co-ordinator is working well with subject departments to improve the consistency of marking across the college.
52. Although pupils have targets, there is no consistent mechanism for building challenge into them to improve pupil achievement and the achievement of teaching groups. Individual teachers know which pupils' achievement is different from that expected, but there is not yet a sufficiently rigorous system across the college to ensure that all of these pupils are identified early and steps taken to help them.
53. Statements for pupils with special educational needs are reviewed regularly and the provision indicated on them is in place. Effective use is made of support staff. Entry assessment data is used well to guide planning for those pupils who need help to develop their literacy. Once pupils are in the college, the identification of those with special educational needs through departments and literacy screening is good. Liaison with outside agencies is very good and links are used very effectively to gain advice on strategies and approaches.

## **Sixth form**

54. Arrangements for assessing students' attainment and progress are good. Teachers know their students well and provide individual teaching and feedback. They use their knowledge of the students' progress to plan the next teaching steps. Marking is good and provides students with information about how to improve their performance. Teachers are readily available to provide further help and advice for students who want it. A characteristic of many lessons is the teacher's confident knowledge of the examination requirements that they reveal to students so that they, in turn, become better at evaluating their own performance. It also complements the good marking so that students can focus their efforts to improve productively.
55. Educational support and guidance are very good: a close personal interest is taken in the welfare and progress of each student. Students report a high degree of satisfaction with the advice and induction procedures for sixth form study. The college is particularly effective in guiding students into appropriate courses, particularly vocational and work-related courses such as health and social care and supporting their progress through formal and informal reviews. The vast majority are confident that they are in the right place and on the right course. They are not, however, altogether happy about the information they are given about their own progress, although the inspection found no evidence to support this.
56. Advice to students on careers and higher education choices is very good and students have access to both information and staff who can assist with making appropriate choices. This includes information on

alternatives to moving directly from college to higher education. For example, a former student gave an inspiring talk on 'gap' year opportunities. Advice and support to students generally is very good in the sixth form and students value the time and access given by teachers to help them with their studies. There is, however, limited space for private study for sixth formers. About a third of students do not think they are treated as mature adults, which may relate to differences of opinion with the college on how free time should be spent in the common room. In general, sixth form lessons are characterised by friendly but respectful relationships, and senior managers are very willing to listen to students' views. Current procedures for monitoring attendance are unsatisfactory. In the case of emergency staff do not know exactly who is on site. The college has recognised this and is introducing an electronic registration system.

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

57. The partnership with parents and carers, and their involvement with the college is satisfactory. As more pupils stay on into the sixth form and college numbers increase, the support of parents for academic work and study will become increasingly important. Parents' and carers' views of the college are mostly positive, although many are not very involved with their children's work. Nearly all felt their children are happy at college and are making good progress because of the good teaching they receive. Although most parents said staff were approachable, a few felt the college did not work closely with them. The college has worked very hard to reach out to parents but attendance at events such as parents' evenings is still disappointingly low and some parents are not as supportive as they could be. A small number of parents also complained about the amount of homework. Although the college has done a great deal of work on this aspect recently, pupils themselves report some inconsistency in the timing and amount of homework that teachers give.
58. The college has made strenuous efforts to involve the parents of all pupils with special educational needs. Overall, however, not all parents attend their child's statement review or contribute to the review of individual education plan targets. As a consequence, some parents do not make an effective contribution to their child's learning at college and at home. Parents and carers of children with special educational needs are not always fully involved in decisions made about their children, as when homework requirements are different from those for other pupils.
59. The college provides a good range of information for its parents, with informative brochures for GCSE courses, for sixth form entry and for life after college. The prospectus and sixth form brochure are both full and detailed, the former professionally produced although lacking attendance figures. The governors' annual report to parents lacks a minor statutory item: information on the next election of parent governors, but otherwise is informative. Annual reports to parents are satisfactory, but they do not always contain enough information about what pupils know, understand and can do. Most subject teachers tell pupils how they can improve, but some do not give clear guidance. Parents are pleased with the interim reports, which are in a simpler format. Staff make concerted efforts to keep in touch with parents through telephone calls and letters home.

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

60. The college is well led and managed. Both within the proficient senior team and directly across the college, the headteacher provides very good leadership. This has secured a strong and widespread commitment to the continued improvement that has been characteristic of the college in recent years. Subject and pastoral managers work well together, sustaining the momentum towards the well-defined college goals of high standards of personal and academic achievement.
61. Monitoring of teaching and subsequent action to improve its quality are good. Departmental reviews are integrated with performance management so that there is a strong link between improving departmental effectiveness and teaching quality. Data on pupils' performance is analysed well by senior managers and many subject managers. This has helped to identify where efforts can be best directed in order to improve standards. The decline in results at GCSE in 2002 was anticipated through effective monitoring in Year 10 and this resulted in higher than usual levels of support for that year group. Also, the procedures for support and guidance have been refined in the light of this experience.

62. Senior managers have worked closely within subject areas to promote improvements at Key Stage 3 and GCSE. This has provided good models for subject management; however, some subject and pastoral managers continue to struggle to interpret and use data effectively. The main weakness in the college's evaluation of its own effectiveness has been the analysis of attendance. This is not sufficiently rigorous to identify those factors over which the college can exercise control. Data on attendance has only recently begun to be analysed systematically so that at present there is no clear picture of patterns of poor attendance. Consequently, strategies to improve attendance are too broad to be efficient. Monitoring of some whole college policies, such as those for ICT, literacy and numeracy across the curriculum, is in its early stages and has yet to prove sufficient to identify areas for improvement. Good and very good practice in a number of areas are not consistent.
63. Overall, forward planning is farsighted and has provided a clear pathway for the future direction of the college. Typical of this has been the planning and establishment of the new sixth form. Further examples are found in the planned improvement in the management of some subjects. This has made a significant contribution to the steadily improving standards and good rate of progress made by most pupils. Formal planning spans only the current college year so that future key objectives are not set out in a way that enables whole college priorities to be clearly reflected in subject development plans. The college's development plan identifies priorities and planned action to achieve objectives but these are not linked sufficiently clearly to criteria for pupils' performance.
64. As the college increases in size and delegation becomes more important for sustained future improvements, long-term plans will need to be more widely known. In this way timely preparations can be made, for example regarding specialist college status and planning for continued improvement, whatever the outcome of any application. As new routines are being established to meet emerging needs, there is a strong reliance on the energy and commitment of some managers. Procedures that they are employing are not sufficiently structured for consistent application. For example, arrangements for passing on valuable training experiences are not sufficient to ensure full benefit is gained. There is a limited understanding of each other's roles that leads to some omissions arising and efforts being duplicated.
65. The governing body plays a strong role in determining the strategic direction of the college, for example in establishing the sixth form, initiating work towards Investors in People status and currently in pursuing specialist college status. At the more day-to-day level, the governing body has overlooked some details of statutory requirements, for example adequate provision of religious education in the sixth form and details in the annual report to parents.
66. The learning support department is led well by an experienced special educational needs co-ordinator who manages an effective team of well-qualified and experienced teaching assistants. They know the needs of their pupils very well and they are well deployed, although there is insufficient support in some teaching groups where there are pupils with literacy and behavioural difficulties.
67. There are enough trained and qualified staff to teach all the subjects on the curriculum, with particular strengths in art, physical education and citizenship. The college has pioneered some unusual arrangements such as sharing a business studies teacher with another local school and running tutorials in law at a distance through the use of video-conferencing technology. The induction of newly qualified teachers is good and they report feeling well supported. There is a generous number of teaching assistants who work well as a team and give good support to teachers.
68. Accommodation is mostly good and much is relatively modern but the current reliance on a large proportion of temporary buildings is far from ideal. The new technology block was purpose built and has since been further improved; the accommodation for physical education, including the swimming pool and various outside pitches offers very good facilities that are also shared with the community. As the college has grown, the space available for pupils' free time has been seriously restricted. Resources for learning are good in many areas of the curriculum such as maths, science and ICT; the library is also a good resource.
69. The college's finances are prudently managed and resources are used well to pursue educational priorities. The college provides teaching support for pupils who find learning difficult in addition to that from income generated by pupils with special educational needs; however, lack of clarity in the

reconciliation of income and expenditure prevents that view being widely understood. Principles of best value are applied well in major spending decisions, such as deciding on the lease or purchase of ICT equipment, but evaluations do not always use the range of tools available, for example by comparing the college with national benchmarks. Overall, the college provides sound value for money.

## **Sixth form**

70. Leadership and management of the sixth form are good and have played a significant part in the successful establishment of the sixth form in the last two years. The head of the sixth form gives a strong lead that has helped to create a good ethos and team spirit amongst both students and staff. Importantly, this encourages students to work hard and achieve well, making good use of their time in the sixth form and enjoying the experience.
71. Students' views are canvassed and comments, interests and preferences taken into careful account in planning. The development plan provides a firm outline, but detail of costing and success criteria are less clear. The entry policy is open and courses are tailored to students' aspirations. This has led to some students following advanced courses with lower levels of prior attainment than typical. These students are well supported and though their results are modest, they represent good achievement for individual students. Value added measures are used well both to guide target setting and to evaluate effectiveness. The present small scale of the sixth form allows for an individual approach to serve both academic counselling and evaluation of provision but as student numbers increase, course leaders will need to undertake more of these evaluations directly.
72. The resources available to the sixth form during its establishment broadly match those expected, although there is a small subsidy provided by the main college. Course provision, including that provided by outside agencies, is carefully evaluated and appropriate action taken. Some has been sustained; some has not. Considering the good provision, its impact on the good achievement of students, the imaginative use of technology and the productive collaboration with the grammar school, the sixth form is cost effective.
73. Staffing, accommodation and learning resources are adequate for current courses but accommodation for students' independent study is insufficient to encourage them all to attend other than at lesson times.

## **WHAT SHOULD THE COLLEGE DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?**

74. In order to improve further, senior managers and governors should:

(1) Improve the impact of good teaching by:

- improving attendance, especially in Years 10 and 11
- reducing the loss of teaching time through pupils' poor punctuality

(see paragraphs 4, 5, 17, 19, 30, 50)

(2) Improve the effectiveness with which pupils learn by:

- ensuring pupils understand the targets towards which they are working
- monitoring their progress more consistently
- providing pupils who have special educational needs with more precise targets

(see paragraphs 9, 31, 52, 80, 95, 99, 117)

(3) Improve provision in design and technology and religious education by:

- raising standards in design work, resistant materials and textiles
- giving training in workshop practice and textiles
- providing more time for teaching religious education.



(see paragraphs 6, 7, 108, 109, 110, 111, 112, 150, 152)

(4) Refine management procedures to achieve greater consistency and match the needs of the growing college by:

- reviewing systems for development planning
- broadening managers' understanding of each other's roles
- using national benchmarks to evaluate the effectiveness of the college
- more careful scrutiny by the governing body of its duties

(see paragraphs 49, 50, 62, 59, 63, 64, 65, 69)

## **Sixth form**

(1) Improve overall attendance by:

- more rigorous registration procedures

(2) Improve facilities for students' private study

(3) Fulfil requirements for religious education for all students by:

- complementing their experience of the annual study day
- introducing more time for reflection in sixth form assemblies

(see paragraphs 22, 46, 56, 59, 73)

Other issues, not included above, which should be considered by the college:

- provide better opportunities for pupils to use their ICT skills in other subjects
- ensure greater consistency in the quality and frequency of homework
- greater involvement of parents, especially those of pupils with special educational needs
- review procedures for reconciling income and expenditure for pupils with special educational needs
- prepare pupils and students for living in a culturally diverse society.

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 - 11	142
	Sixth form	34
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		63

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
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#### Years 7 - 11

Number	5	40	62	30	5	0	0
Percentage	4	28	44	21	4	0	0

#### Sixth form

Number	0	15	17	2	0	0	0
Percentage	0	44	50	6	0	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting the percentages for the sixth form as each lesson represents more than three percentage points.

### Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	711	91
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	71	8

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	29	3
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	110	3

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

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	21
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	16

## Attendance

### Authorised absence

	%
School data	8.8
National comparative data	8.0

### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.7
National comparative data	1.0

Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for 2001.

## Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 (Year 9)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	59	62	121

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 5 and above	Boys	40	45	43
	Girls	51	44	43
	Total	91	89	86
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	School	75 (67)	74 (72)	70 (68)
	National	66 (64)	67 (66)	66 (66)
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 6 or above	School	17 (26)	51 (35)	35 (33)
	National	31 (31)	40 (43)	34 (34)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 5 and above	Boys	40	45	38
	Girls	52	45	37
	Total	92	90	75
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	School	75 (61)	74 (64)	62 (65)
	National	67 (65)	70 (68)	67 (64)
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 6 or above	School	24 (24)	29 (27)	35 (36)
	National	35 (31)	42 (42)	34 (33)

Percentages in brackets refer to 2001.

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	51	55	106

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* - C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	13	41	46
	Girls	21	51	53
	Total	34	92	99
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	32 (46)	87 (90)	93 (92)
	National	51 (48)	89 (91)	96 (96)

Percentages in brackets refer to 2001.

GCSE results		GCSE points score
Average points score per pupil	School	32.3* (36.1)
	National	34.6* (39.0)

\* New 'capped' point scores. Figures in brackets refer to 2001 when scores were not 'capped'.

### Attainment at the end of the sixth form (Year 13)

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS / Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Boys	Girls	All
School	Number of candidates	9	17	26
	Average point score per candidate	97.8	239	190
National	Average point score per candidate	*	*	*

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS examinations			For candidates entered for Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Boys	Girls	All	Boys	Girls	All
School	Number of candidates	5	13	18	4	4	8
	Average points score per candidate	90	238	197	108	245	176
National	Average points score per candidate	*	*	*	*	*	*

\* National comparison data for AS/A Level results in 2002 are not yet available. The points scoring system changed in 2002.

### ***Ethnic background of pupils***

<b>Categories used in the Annual School Census</b>
White – British
White – Irish
White – any other White background
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean
Mixed – White and Black African
Mixed – White and Asian
Mixed – any other mixed background
Asian or Asian British - Indian
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background
Black or Black British – Caribbean
Black or Black British – African
Black or Black British – any other Black background
Chinese
Any other ethnic group
No ethnic group recorded

### ***Exclusions in the last school year***

<b>No of pupils on roll</b>	<b>Number of fixed period exclusions</b>	<b>Number of permanent exclusions</b>
787	39	1
1		
2		
12	2	

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

### ***Teachers and classes***

#### **Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	49.2
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16.3

#### **Education support staff: Y7 – Y13**

Total number of education support staff	23
Total aggregate hours worked per week	514

#### **Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13**

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	75.7
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#### **Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11**

Key Stage 3	23
Key Stage 4	21

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	2001/2
	£
Total income	2,080,118
Total expenditure	2,128,620
Expenditure per pupil	2,896
Balance brought forward from previous year	88,988
Balance carried forward to next year	32,486

### ***Recruitment of teachers***

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	10
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	19

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0.67
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0.67
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	802
Number of questionnaires returned	147

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	44	50	4	1	1
My child is making good progress in school.	43	51	3	1	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	27	63	6	0	4
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	26	52	19	3	0
The teaching is good.	34	58	5	1	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	35	48	13	1	3
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	57	37	3	1	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	54	42	2	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	32	48	15	3	3
The school is well led and managed.	57	38	1	2	3
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	38	52	7	1	1
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	28	49	10	3	10

## PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4

### ENGLISH

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

#### Strengths

- Good teaching encourages pupils to achieve well.
- Results at the end of Year 9 have improved significantly in 2002 tests.
- The department is well led and managed.
- Pupils demonstrate good attitudes to learning.

#### Areas for improvement

- Standards need to be raised in Years 10 and 11, including examination results.
- Higher standards of literacy should be promoted.
- More use should be made of ICT in lessons.

75. In the national tests taken at the end of Year 9 (Key Stage 3 SATs) in 2002, pupils' average points score was in line with the national average and that of similar schools. The proportion reaching Level 5 or higher was above the national average. As standards of pupils' English when they enter the college are below the national average, these results represent good achievement for these pupils. Results were similar to mathematics and science. Girls consistently achieved higher than boys.
76. In the GCSE examinations in 2002, the proportion of pupils achieving grades A\*-C was below average. Results in both English language and English literature were below those in previous years. In the light of their earlier standards, pupils' achievement was satisfactory. Overall, since the last inspection results show an upward trend. These improvements result from good teaching. English results were similar to those in mathematics and above those in science.
77. In Years 7 to 9, pupils generally are attaining in line with national expectations but their writing is below average. Organisation and sentence construction are weak, particularly amongst lower-ability groups. Younger pupils who enter the college with a low reading age lack fluency when reading aloud. More able Year 7 pupils understand how writers use language imaginatively, and the less able use rules of spelling when writing. Teachers insist that pupils read aloud and discuss the meaning of texts. This improves their understanding and enables them to learn well. By Year 9 pupils analyse text and develop an understanding of character. They showed particular empathy towards Anne Frank and the difficulties she faced as a teenager living in fear, and the issues of racism. After reading *The Frankenstein's Monster*, more able pupils discussed moral issues of cloning very well. They make the distinction between story and play clearly. When pupils with special educational needs have additional support in class to help them read and understand difficult words and phrases, they contribute well to discussions and make good progress. Girls make more mature contributions than boys do.
78. In Years 10 and 11, pupils are attaining in line with expected standards. Higher-attaining pupils use English effectively in a range of situations and for a variety of objectives and audiences. In their study of poems from different cultures and traditions, they relate to them and communicate thoughts and feelings well. For example, after reading *Presents from my aunt in Pakistan* and *Search for my tongue*, pupils identified themes by comparing the poems, their language, and techniques used by the writer. Some show clear awareness of the discrimination faced by people because of accent, dialect and use of non-standard English. Their writing is confident and demonstrates appropriate choices of style. They comment thoughtfully on writings of the twentieth century, and in their narrative writing they create characters and settings well. Their work is usually well presented and readable but this is not consistent throughout the years. Many have problems with spelling and grammatical accuracy. In lower-attaining groups, there is less purposeful discussion, pupils' listening is immature, reading is below standard and writing is very limited. Good support for pupils with special needs ensures that they make good progress. There is still a significant proportion of pupils, and particularly boys, who do not have the incentive to do well in their GCSE courses.



79. Pupils make good progress in literacy from lower than expected standards when they join the college to achieve in line with national expectations. Representatives from all departments of the college meet regularly to support and monitor the effectiveness of literacy teaching, which is a feature of many lessons; however, there remain inconsistencies both between and within subjects. Pupils are told the learning objectives and teachers emphasise key words and vocabulary well at the start of some lessons. Speaking and listening, reading and writing are practised in most subjects and especially in English.
80. Overall, the quality of teaching is good in all years. It is sometimes very good. Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge. They promote and celebrate success by inspiring the pupils and by displaying good work. Objectives are made clear at the beginning of lessons and checks for achievement are made at the end. Marking is good, with advice on how to improve, and teachers ensure that pupils know their levels and agree targets with them. Formal assessments are done and the analysis of results is used well to monitor performance and for lesson planning, but this is not consistent in the department. Teachers have good relationships with pupils and generally manage them well. They use effective methods to balance speaking and listening, reading and writing and make use of ongoing assessment to ensure that pupils understand. Where teaching is less effective, there is a slower pace and ineffective class control in long lessons with lower-ability pupils. Occasionally, the boisterousness of some pupils, mainly boys, reduces the pace of learning. There is little use of ICT in lessons, although some pupils use it well for assignments. Pupils, however, benefit from drama and enriching theatre visits. During the inspection week, pupils were rehearsing *The Demon Headmaster* with great enthusiasm and confidence. The subject contributes well to the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and citizenship by discussing moral issues arising from the study of texts, plays and poetry.
81. The department is well led and managed. There is a clear vision and action plan of priorities for the subject. The subject team works well together, is supported very well by senior managers and is committed to the continuing improvement of standards. Monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning are effective and new teachers are well supported. The scheme of work incorporates the Key Stage 3 National Literacy Strategy, and is helping teachers to provide more explicit instruction in basic skills work, thereby having a beneficial impact on standards. The library is underused for English teaching. The accommodation benefits from displays of authors and books, key words and learning expectations but some of the rooms are too small for larger classes. The subject has made good improvement since the last inspection, particularly in the organisation of teaching and use of assessment procedures. Results overall show an upward trend.

## Drama

82. The quality of provision for drama is good. Three-quarters of pupils entered for GCSE drama in 2002 gained A\*-C grades, above the national average, a significant feature being both boys and girls doing well. The attainment of current pupils in Year 10 and 11 is in line with national expectations. Work seen in Years 7 to 9 shows standards are average and are improving. Most pupils achieve well, including those pupils with special educational needs. Year 9 pupils can identify problems of using space and the importance of facing the audience, evident in their rehearsal of *The Crucible*. Year 11 pupils confidently switch between characters and can modify script, as they did to include girls in *Bouncers*. Pupils have good attitudes to learning and join in well. Drama helps their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. It raises their self-esteem and they gain confidence in evaluating well each other's work.
83. Teaching is good. Relationships and support for pupils of different abilities are very good, and consequently pupils are willing to take risks, showing confidence as learners. Organisation and management are also good, showing good use of time, space and people. Planning is linked well to shared objectives so pupils know exactly what is expected of them and how successful they are. Teachers use their subject knowledge well to help pupils to extend their learning and to ensure that pupils understand that drama has a deeper purpose: to convey feelings, express ideas and opinions. The department is well led; staff work well together and maintain good links with English. The curriculum is enriched by performances and visits to theatres. ICT is not used in drama, and writing skills are underdeveloped. The drama studio is a good facility but the other classroom has poor acoustics.

## MATHEMATICS

Overall, the quality of provision in mathematics is **good**.

### Strengths

- Standards are improving, with good achievement in Years 7 to 9.
- Teaching is good from an established team of specialists.
- Assessment procedures are good and marking has improved.
- Leadership is good, and management of the Key Stage 3 Numeracy Strategy, accommodation and resources are good.

### Areas for improvement

- Consistency of teaching and learning across the department.
- The use of computers as required by the National Curriculum needs development.
- Pupils need more time at the end of lessons to reflect on their own learning.
- Too many pupils disrupt others, waste time by idle chatter, and are late to lessons.

84. In national tests taken at the end of Year 9 (Key Stage 3 SATs) in 2002, pupils' average points score is in line with both the national average and that of similar schools. Results are similar to those in English and science. A higher than expected proportion of pupils reached Level 5 or higher, with some reaching much higher levels. This was an improvement on the previous year. Results have steadily improved since the previous inspection, being above national expectations since 2000. There is no significant difference between the attainment of boys and girls. Overall, standards at the end of Year 9 and at the end of Year 11 are average. As pupils entered the college with below average attainment, achievement is good overall and better at present in Years 7 to 9.
85. At the end of Year 11, GCSE results in 2001 were close to the national average for the proportion of A\*-C grades. In 2002 the proportion of A\*-C grades was below the national average with, as in 2001, all candidates achieving at least grade G. Science and English results were also below the national averages, lower results being due to poor attendance and the attitudes of some pupils in that year group. Mathematics GCSE results were better than predicted for most pupils, with no significant difference between the results of boys and girls.
86. Where lesson planning did not take sufficient account of pupils' prior attainment and aptitude, standards were lower than expected, for instance in a Year 7 top set where there was no challenge and too slow a pace. Both Year 8 and 9 top sets were challenged by well-planned work on circles at appropriate levels. The use of circle formulae was the basis for the Year 9 lesson. After the teacher's reminder of the calculation needed for circumference and area, pupils worked through unfamiliar problems combining parts of circles with other shapes on a very clear, well-prepared worksheet. Some pupils had problems distinguishing between decimal places and significant figures, but the teacher explained this very well so that a numeracy problem did not impede their learning. Further challenge and an interesting discussion resulted from the plenary activity. Year 8 pupils drew circles on squared paper, estimated the area and noted the relationship between it and the radius squared. The success of this investigation was hindered by the poor estimation skills of many pupils, although they reached the intended conclusion.
87. Lower sets achieved well where teachers and teaching assistants could give individual attention to pupils, many of whom had special educational needs. In a Year 9 lesson a teaching assistant worked well with a pupil with hearing impairment, making sure work on data-handling was understood. Another teaching assistant helped pupils with moderate and specific learning difficulties to achieve as well as others using practical equipment, dice and shakers to conduct experiments. The work was planned well to suit the class, many of whom had emotional or behavioural problems, and the teacher circulated round the class helping individuals and keeping everyone on task. A Year 8 low set also had two teaching assistants to help pupils with a range of special educational needs. Excellent worksheets with interesting pictures, and associated overhead projector transparencies, helped pupils develop estimation skills, following methods explained very well by the teacher. Middle-ability sets were large and often contained pupils with poorer attitudes or a range of special educational needs. Teachers had difficulty giving the individual attention needed or keeping everyone on task without assistants, and achievement suffered.

88. Number skills are taught well and developed regularly in lesson introductions. Teachers challenge pupils' thinking well by presenting unfamiliar problems at the start of lessons. Individual whiteboards are used well, allowing instant assessment of pupils' individual ability to recall or to calculate. Teachers emphasise knowledge of mathematical terms and their meaning well, encouraging pupils to talk about methods they use and to explain their mathematical thinking. Literacy development for older and more able pupils takes the form of writing sentences about results of investigations. For example the Year 10 top set using graphical calculators to discover the relationship between linear equations and their graphs, then wrote sentences about what they had discovered. Investigations and discovering mathematics by 'doing' was an important feature of successful teaching and learning, as in the Year 10 set drawing lines across circles, counting arcs, points and regions, and finding the number patterns created. Presenting unfamiliar problems was also a successful method for higher-attaining pupils, as in one Year 11 group proving geometrical theorems, and another combining Pythagoras' theorem and trigonometrical ratios in preparation for 'mock' examinations.
89. Teaching is good overall. Most teachers are appropriately qualified and experienced, with good subject knowledge and understanding of how to teach mathematics well. Teachers plan their lessons well using an introductory activity, although these often take more time than planned, and the range of activities is limited. The conclusion of lessons is often rushed, not involving pupils sufficiently in reflection to reinforce their learning. Homework is usually set, completed and marked well, with constructive comments, an improvement since the previous inspection. Assessment is good, using National Curriculum levels and descriptors in terms that pupils can understand in Years 7 to 9, and GCSE grades and requirements in Years 10 and 11. Teachers encourage pupils' good attitudes but some pupils are often very late to lessons, on several occasions reducing the effective lesson time by 10 minutes. Teachers generally manage pupils well, dealing effectively with difficult individuals but some do not challenge low-level disruption by pupils talking, even while being taught. This inattention and waste of time prevents others from concentrating fully.
90. Leadership and management are good. A clear rationale provides a good framework for development. Current guidance for improving numeracy teaching has been well used and the initiative has been well managed. The training and support from the LEA Numeracy Consultant throughout last year has been well employed to develop a productive numeracy training day; however, there is as yet no college-wide numeracy policy or means of monitoring the developing provision. The National Curriculum is covered to appropriate breadth and depth, except for where ICT should be used, a weakness since the previous inspection, although training is now taking place. Resources are good with plentiful textbooks, and accommodation is now very good. Overall improvement since the previous inspection is good, with higher standards and better teaching.

## SCIENCE

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

### Strengths

- Standards are improving, especially in Years 7 to 9.
- Good teaching, particularly high expectation, leads to good achievement.
- Very good relationships and pupils' positive response promote effective learning.
- Management is good, particularly detailed data analysis and provision of resources.
- Homework is used well.

### Areas for improvement

- Specific measurable targets should be used to raise attainment.
- There needs to be consistency of good practice, especially in marking and assessment.
- Independent learning skills of the pupils through the use of hypothesis should be fostered.
- A greater variety of work should be provided to extend higher-attaining pupils and support those with weaker literacy and organisational skills.

91. Results of national tests at the end of Year 9 (Key Stage 3 SATs) in 2002 were in line with the national average and that of similar schools. As pupils entered the college with levels below the national average, this represents good achievement. The proportion reaching the higher levels has risen significantly in the

last few years. These results were similar to those in mathematics and English. Overall, standards at the end of Year 9 are average and represent good achievement.

92. The proportion of pupils awarded A\* - C grades at GCSE was below the national average in 2002, a decline from 2001; however, the pupils did perform in line with the predictions based on their earlier attainment, which was lower than other year groups. This means that they made satisfactory progress. Current pupils are making good progress.
93. In Years 7 to 9 the pupils demonstrate good levels of knowledge and understanding in lessons, with a higher proportion of pupils moving towards the expected level. The main reason for this is that teachers set good examples, and the very good relationships between pupils and staff mean that pupils respond well to the high expectations teachers have of them. Higher-attaining pupils in Year 9 understand simple chemical equations and are coming to terms with more complicated reactions. Middle groups of pupils are able to compare the structure of a plant and animal cells as an introduction to reproduction and heredity. Lower-attaining pupils are less confident, and low literacy levels are hindering their progress and attainment. All pupils handle scientific apparatus safely and confidently, but too often they are directed on how to carry out an experiment and so the predictive and planning elements are missing in Years 7 to 9 and the predictive element in Years 10 and 11. They do discuss the results and give suggestions for refining the method and this is an improvement since the last inspection. Year 10 and 11 pupils cover the requirements of the examination course in suitable depth; Year 11 pupils can effectively consider the varying fluctuations to wildlife populations following human intervention. A number of pupils are able to identify animal adaptations and explain the significance of these whereas weaker pupils in the group identify the adaptations but do not explain their significance. In all years, pupils with special educational needs are well supported and make good progress.
94. The teaching of science is good throughout the college. Very good relationships between teachers and pupils provide a secure environment in which good learning can take place. Literacy is stressed well; throughout lessons teachers draw attention to correct technical vocabulary. Teachers use time efficiently, maintaining a steady pace by setting limits on the duration of activities. Often ways are used to help pupils to remember concepts by linking information to everyday examples. Examination requirements are made clear. The good attitudes and behaviour of the pupils complement the good teaching so that good learning takes place. Homework is used effectively to prepare for and extend work in lessons, and makes good use of textbooks. On occasions when the teacher dominates the lesson, pupils do not learn as well. At times, the literacy content of lessons for lower-attaining pupils is too high so they struggle to understand the concepts. Although teachers know their pupils well, there is no formal structure to provide extension work to stretch the higher-attaining pupils or support lower-attaining pupils who have weak literacy and organisational skills.
95. Written comments on the pupils' work vary too widely. The best give clear guidance on the level reached and what is needed to raise the work to the next level, but in other cases the work is just ticked with a grade. In all years the good quality of teaching is supported by a detailed system of monitoring the pupils' work through tests; however, not all pupils keep a record of their own performance so cannot track their own progress and improve their work. This is inconsistent, varying from teacher to teacher.
96. The leadership and management of the department are good. There is continual analysis of data to identify areas of development; however, strategies to achieve improvement need to be clearer so that improvement can be more easily measured. There is a clear commitment by all staff to move the department forward. The curriculum provided meets the requirements of the National Curriculum, although the time allocated in Years 10 and 11 is below the national average and the timetabling arrangements of split classes and the spread of the lessons during the week at times inhibits learning. This was seen with a lower-attaining group of pupils who, owing to shared teaching arrangements, were studying two units of work at the same time and so consolidation was more difficult. The use of ICT in the classroom has been limited by its availability, but with the addition of an extra room more is being used. Attention is paid to literacy and numeracy aspects in lessons but the formalising of this in the form of policies is still in its early stages, as is citizenship.
97. Since the last inspection there has been good improvement in the areas identified: much better teacher assessments, and a steady rise in standards.



## ART AND DESIGN

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

### Strengths

- Teachers' knowledge and understanding of their subject are very good and they have high expectations of pupils' work.
- The majority of pupils have positive attitudes.
- The curriculum provision is good.
- Leadership of the department is good.

### Areas for improvement

- Standards in GCSE examinations need to be raised.
- Greater planning and preparation for some lessons are needed.
- Teachers do not always manage challenging behaviour in some lessons in Years 7 and 9.
- Accommodation, in particular that for three-dimensional work and ceramics, needs reorganisation.

98. The proportion of pupils gaining grades A\*-C in the GCSE examination in 2002 was below the national average and girls significantly outperformed boys. This was a decline from the previous year when results were closer to the national average and boys marginally outperformed girls. The department is currently reviewing teaching strategies and the curriculum provision for boys. For example, it has introduced printmaking and use of the computer to interest and challenge boys particularly. The underlying trend in results over the past few years is steadily upward. With the good teaching and learning, the improved curriculum and the generally positive attitudes of pupils, standards are rising again.
99. Standards in Year 9 are in line with national expectations. Current good teaching is keeping pupils on course to maintain this standard through the year. Pupils enter the college with a very varied experience and understanding of art; they are offered a well-balanced curriculum to ensure that their basic skills and understanding of line, tone, colour and texture are effectively improved. Higher-attaining pupils in Year 7 can identify and interpret symbols used in aboriginal art, noting intricate patterns and reproducing them well. Teachers do not give sufficient guidance for low-attaining pupils to improve their weak drawing skills. Pupils in Year 9 use their knowledge of the work of Lichtenstein to produce effective studies in the 'pop art' style, with some very good studies in high visual relief; however, they do not have a clear recollection of work done in previous lessons and do not participate well in critical evaluations so are not sufficiently clear about how to improve their work. Teachers have high expectations of pupils and ensure that all, including those with special educational needs or a particular talent, make good progress in lessons.
100. Standards in Year 11 are broadly in line with national expectations. Teachers emphasise observational work well in Year 10 so pupils use sketchbooks well to record natural and man-made objects. They effectively develop drawings from still life into painting and printmaking. Higher-attaining pupils are meticulous and thoughtful in their work and have a good sense of formal composition. Lower-attaining pupils lack skills and imagination and are not willing to take risks that would develop their creative capacity. A workshop led by a well-known willow sculptress, and collaboration with the local grammar school were very successful and led to a high standard of wire sculpture being produced. Even though teachers use exercises to help pupils make more rapid progress with their drawing skills, in Year 11 lower-attaining pupils have not developed drawing skills sufficiently and use immature images in their work. They study a wide range of well-known artists and art movements and work hard at the annotation of their sketchbooks and final pieces of work. There are good examples of sculpture and constructional work, although ceramics is relatively weak in three-dimensional studies.
101. The quality of teaching is good overall. It is often very good in Years 10 and 11. Teachers have a very good grasp of their specialisms and communicate knowledge very effectively in lessons. They introduce or consolidate technical processes well by demonstrating skills practically. Relationships are very good and enable a relaxed, but productive atmosphere to exist in the majority of lessons. In the best planned and prepared lessons teachers involve pupils closely with skilful questioning. The most effective lessons end with a wide-ranging critical evaluation of the work done in the lesson. The annotation of work does not receive the critical attention it should and is a general weakness in all years. ICT is increasingly

used, but not all teachers are confident in using the high quality software for digital imaging. Teachers do not always manage the inappropriate behaviour and minor disruptions that it generates in some classes.

102. Leadership and management are good. There is a strong commitment, shared by all teachers, to raise examination results in particular. Work is effectively monitored and well-prioritised targets set, both for the department and for individual teachers. Pupils' progress is very well tracked, using National Curriculum levels. Analysis of examination results is in the early stages of development. Accommodation is spacious but not well organised, with resultant cramped areas for three-dimensional work and a lack of good display and storage space. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Leadership of the department is now good and there is some use of ICT in art. Resources are now good, with a very good improvement in the resources for printmaking. The gender gap in attainment remains to be dealt with and accommodation has not improved.

## CITIZENSHIP

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

### Strengths

- A high priority has been given to the subject and expectations of raised standards of personal development are high.
- Specialist teaching is good.
- Thorough overall planning has quickly established the subject.
- Very good leadership and management ensure the positive educational direction of the subject.

### Areas for improvement

- Development of provision in Years 7 to 9 is required to make the subject more obvious to pupils.
- Training for teachers to improve provision in other subjects is needed.
- A system of monitoring should be introduced to ensure that all pupils have equal opportunities to participate in citizenship activities.

103. As the subject was formally introduced in September 2002 there is as yet no basis for national comparison of standards. In the short time since the subject was introduced, pupils have compiled satisfactory records of work they have done that show they are making good progress and achieving well.
104. Planning in the college has been very good and provision meets with the national requirements for citizenship well. The first two strands of gaining knowledge and understanding, and developing the skills of enquiry and communication, are being taught through specialist lessons while there are plans for the third strand of participation and responsible action to be taught through a variety of activities during the college year. This strand has not yet been developed with the necessary monitoring in place to ensure that all pupils have equal opportunities for participation. A good subject handbook guides teaching and there is a system of monitoring and evaluating both pupils' progress and their perceptions of the subject.
105. Most of the citizenship in Years 7 to 9 is taught through other subjects, with aspects incorporated into schemes of work across the curriculum. Any topics not covered in this way are taught in the weekly tutorial period as part of personal and social education. This provision has been guided by a thorough subject audit and effective teaching was seen in physical education, geography and modern languages; however, in other subjects the requirements for citizenship are not yet well understood by teachers, and pupils are not clearly aware when they are studying a citizenship theme. So far there has been no whole-college training to support teachers in this.
106. Provision in Years 10 and 11 is by a taught double lesson a week leading to a short-course GCSE in the subject for all pupils, whatever their level of attainment. So far only Year 10 pupils are following the GCSE course though Year 11 pupils are following a course that covers several areas of citizenship such as personal responsibility and relationships. In these lessons pupils are making good progress, producing some thoughtful work as a result of good teaching and positive attitudes. For example a Year 11 group was making decisions about responsible driving, while the Year 10 groups were brought together for a very effective presentation by the army about human rights in Kosovo. This presentation

was sensitively handled and brought together history, politics and human empathy in a way that made a strong impression on all the pupils.

107. The subject is very well led and managed. The co-ordinator provides energetic leadership with a clear vision of what is required to establish citizenship within the curriculum. The present level of provision represents a good start for the subject and a high capacity to succeed further.

## DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

### Strengths

- Teaching is good in Years 7, 8 and 9.
- Accommodation and resources are good.

### Areas for improvement

- Standards need to be raised in resistant materials and textiles with further training for teachers.
- Teachers' expectations for pupils' achievement in design are not sufficiently high.
- Successful teaching methods need to be established in all subject areas.

108. Standards in design and technology are below average at the end of Year 9 and Year 11. GCSE results were below the national average in 2002, as they have been in recent years. However a significant number of high grades were obtained, continuing the improving trend in recent years. Boys' results were near to the national average in 2001 but girls' results were lower than their national average. Results in graphic products, introduced since the last inspection, and food technology have improved in the two most recent years. Food technology results are broadly in line with attainment at the time of the last inspection. Results in resistant materials have been consistently low for four years. Results for textiles have been low except in 2001 when there was an improvement to near the national average; however, considering pupils' prior learning, these results indicate satisfactory progress overall.
109. Pupils' technology skills are below average on entering the college; however, enthusiastic teaching during Year 7 captures pupils' interest so that they enjoy the subject. They make good progress during Years 8 and 9 but literacy difficulties reduce the quality of design work so that standards remain below expectations at the end of Year 9. There is not sufficient use made of ICT to improve presentation. Many pupils with special educational needs are in the lowest set and benefit from essential extra help from teaching assistants, enabling them to make satisfactory progress. More able pupils in the top sets in Year 9 organise their work well and produce some above average work, for example when designing and making clocks. The most capable of these pupils are not given opportunities to increase their knowledge and expertise to the level of which they are capable. Numeracy is developed as pupils produce cutting lists and measure quantities. By the end of Year 11 standards in design are still below average overall although making skills have improved in some lessons to be close to average.
110. Teaching is satisfactory overall. In Years 7 to 9 it is good and sometimes very good. In Years 10 and 11 teaching is satisfactory and sometimes good. Teachers generally have sufficient knowledge and understanding of their subject areas, although some further training is needed in workshop practice and in the use of textiles. In most cases pupils are well managed during lessons so that time and resources are efficiently used. Planning is thorough and often includes timed sections for each separate lesson activity. Some food technology lessons conclude with particularly effective evaluations of the work done. Teaching was only unsatisfactory in an instance when poor attitudes and workshop practice were tolerated, presenting a safety hazard. Teachers' expectations of pupils' design work are not sufficiently high for achievement to be good. In particular more pupils' work needs to be completed in the time allowed. The quality of learning is good in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. Pupils rapidly acquire skills and knowledge in Year 7 and learn design techniques more slowly in Years 8 and 9. Where teachers insist on higher standards of behaviour and check that work has been completed carefully, pupils respond well and make good progress; however, where casual attitudes go unchallenged, pupils' progress is impeded. In some classes attendance is poor and too often lessons are delayed through the very late arrival of pupils. Although pupils' work is assessed at the end of



modules, more formative feedback at regular intervals would help learning. The presence of a teaching assistant helps greatly when the computer suite is being used, as for example during a very effective graphics lesson where Year 8 pupils were designing a charity box.

111. The curriculum is good. It provides a broad range of opportunities for learning technology through the basic areas of food, graphics, resistant materials and textiles. Thus, pupils work with a wide variety of materials in both key stages. The courses provide for the interest of both boys and girls, although resistant materials is mainly chosen by boys and textiles by girls in Years 10 and 11. Health and safety requirements are generally met, although the dress code of some pupils working with power tools needs review. There are few opportunities for enrichment through extra-curricular activities.
112. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Departmental documentation gives clear details of all departmental policies. Schemes of work give details of time allocation, task, differentiation possibilities, risk assessment and deadlines and therefore provide appropriate guidance for all teachers. The technology accommodation is very good and allows the curriculum to be taught effectively. Learning resources are good in all subject areas. An ICT suite is centrally placed and can be used by pupils during some lessons. Technical staff provide valuable help but their roles could usefully be extended to helping pupils directly. Each subject area is well equipped and the building has been improved since the last inspection to provide additional work space and a lift for the disabled. Professional development takes place as the need arises; however monitoring hasn't identified the best teaching methods and established these in each subject area. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory.

## GEOGRAPHY

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

### Strengths

- Standards at GCSE are rising.
- The quality of teaching and learning is very good.
- Curriculum provision includes good opportunities for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

### Areas for improvement

- Assessment results need to be used to raise attainment.
- ICT needs to be fully integrated into teaching and learning
- The return of the full time head of department will provide necessary continuity of leadership

113. GCSE results for 2002 were in line with the national average, with girls' results a little better than boys', although there is no particular trend of gender differences from year to year. In 2001 the results were above the national average and pupils entered for geography did significantly better in this subject than in the average of all other subjects. The picture has been the same in previous years and there has been an overall improvement in the proportion of pupils gaining higher grades.
114. Standards in work seen show attainment by the end of Year 9 is below national expectations overall. The proportion of pupils achieving the expected level is above average but few reach the higher levels. Pupils' work in Years 7 to 9 indicates that a small proportion of pupils is above average, more are average and below. This picture represents good achievement from well below average attainment on entry to the college, because the very good teaching encourages pupils to think for themselves and to be aware of what they need to do to make progress. By the end of Year 9 pupils have an impressive knowledge of geographical processes such as the formation of rainfall and how vegetation adapts to hot climates, because of a combination of very well-planned lessons and interesting resources. Most pupils can use an atlas effectively to locate places worldwide; however, much of the written work of the lower-attaining pupils is characterised by weakness in literacy skills which makes it difficult for some pupils to organise their work. Where planning was less strong, pupils found it more difficult to make progress because they did not understand exactly what was required of them. Most lessons were examples of very good and excellent practice, for example the clarity of a demonstration to Year 7 pupils on how to use six-figure grid references depended for its obvious success on the careful planning of a sequence of activities and very well judged presentation of information.

115. Standards at the end of Year 11 are average. With very good teaching and attitudes that are almost always very positive, pupils make good progress in Years 10 and 11 and they achieve well. Year 10 pupils are developing thinking skills through exercises and case studies about economic development. Year 11 pupils are learning about the effects that twentieth century suburbanisation has had on village communities. A high standard of coursework has been produced. Teaching in these year groups is characterised by very good planning that ensures continuity of learning and development of analytical skills at all stages. Pupils' knowledge is extended by skilful questioning that makes every answer into another question. A positive emphasis on moral and social development comes through decision-making exercises and consideration of the needs of people in unfavourable economic circumstances.
116. The progress of pupils with special educational needs is good in all year groups because they are well-supported by teaching assistants and because teachers give them additional help where necessary and provide work that suits their needs, such as simplified exercises or, for one pupil, enlarged print. Gifted and talented pupils are not identified in teaching groups so there is no evidence of their individual progress, although extended exercises for higher-attaining pupils are provided in many lessons.
117. The quality of teaching and learning is very good overall. Most lessons were good or better and two were excellent, where the highest quality of planning and presentation ensured sustained interest and very effective learning on the part of the pupils. Opportunities to read, speak and write are built into all lessons and numeracy is very well taught. Although pupils do word process their coursework and some ICT exercises are built into the lessons, there is not yet enough use of ICT as an integral part of teaching and learning. New assessment schemes have recently been introduced related to National Curriculum levels but the data produced is not yet used to raise attainment by identifying underachieving pupils early on.
118. The subject is very well led by an acting head of department who is also a deputy headteacher, the appointed head of department being on a sabbatical this year. Although this is a temporary situation, it is not ideal because geography has only been a discrete department since the beginning of the academic year and, although development is going very well, continuity of leadership is important at this stage. Improvement since the last inspection has been good, with better teaching and learning, better achievement, better fieldwork provision and progress on the development of assessment procedures. With this good start there is good capacity to improve the provision of geography further.

## HISTORY

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

### Strengths

- Teaching is good with an emphasis on developing pupils' skills and critical thinking.
- New leadership is taking the subject forward, revising the curriculum and setting targets for improvement.
- Effective use is being made of National Curriculum criteria to assess pupils' attainment in history.

### Areas for improvement

- The standard of pupils' performance at GCSE is poor.
- More opportunities for independent learning, using reference books and ICT are needed.
- There is no local history or fieldwork in Years 7 to 9.

119. GCSE results in history have not improved since the previous inspection, when they were significantly below average. The worst results were recorded in 2001, when only 3 out of 24 candidates achieved grades A\*-C and a third were unclassified. The 2002 examination performance was also poor, with less than a fifth of the 32 candidates achieving the higher grades. Girls did better than boys. Pupils performed well below expectation and below the average of all their other subjects.
120. Pupils enter the college with below average standards in history. New arrangements for subject management and teaching are good and standards are improving. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, are now achieving well and making good progress towards the expected standard by the end of Year 9. This is the result of a renewed emphasis on teaching pupils the skills of learning

history. This is done effectively by setting up lessons as investigations of key questions, well illuminated by historical evidence. For example, in a very good lesson on Cromwell, skilful questioning and a series of graduated exercises helped pupils in a lower set successfully to sort sources into those that presented him as a hero or a villain and suggest reasons for their bias. Good adaptation of learning materials and suitable staging of learning are used in the different history sets. Good marking of pupils' work frequently assesses the National Curriculum level at which pupils are working. Overall, Year 9 pupils have gained a reasonable sense of development over time through their study of industrial changes and the campaign for female suffrage in 19<sup>th</sup> century Britain.

121. In their assessed work, Year 9 pupils made a thoughtful selection of some of the most important 19<sup>th</sup> century achievements when designing a commemorative plate of the Great Exhibition of 1851. Whilst they showed understanding of key features of the period, many pupils were not able to justify their selection in writing of sufficient detail. This aspect of their work is below average. Teachers give careful attention to pupils' literacy, providing them with guides so they can plan extended pieces of writing on causes and consequences of events. Higher attainers can use their initiative to research around topics such as 20<sup>th</sup> century heroines but they have few opportunities to use ICT and reference books for research. Consequently, many are not developing sufficient skills of independent enquiry. Good teaching captures pupils' interest so that they apply themselves well to tasks. Behaviour is good, except for a group of Year 9 boys in a middle set, whose persistent interruptions delayed the progress of the lesson.
122. Year 11 pupils' attainment is below average. Their achievement is good: higher than the GCSE results of recent years would indicate. The two new teachers have made it a priority to improve the examination results. Teachers check pupils' thorough notes carefully and give helpful feedback on assessed pieces of work so that pupils are now making good progress towards achieving their target grades, for example producing good quality coursework on Stalin. Teachers ensure that pupils keep a good balance between information gathering and practising GCSE style questions. The standard of pupils' essays is weak, tending to be more descriptive than analytical. They do not draw on a wider knowledge of the post war settlement of Germany to inform their answers to questions on historical sources about the origins of the Cold War. Whereas previously pupils worked closely from textbooks, teachers now expect pupils to think for themselves rather than copy. For example, in a well-taught lesson on the Cuban crisis, pupils had to work out for themselves President Kennedy's options and assess whether the naval blockade was his best option. The resulting discussion led to good understanding.
123. Teaching is good in all years. High expectations are gradually raising the productivity and standard of pupils' work. Pupils are positive in their attitudes to the subject and are responding well to the individual help they receive from their teachers.
124. Leadership and management are good. Prior to this term, there had been little progress in raising standards since the previous inspection. New leadership has had a significant impact in a very short time to achieve satisfactory improvement in the subject. Efficient management has already produced a new handbook and set out appropriate priorities for the department's development plan. The new teachers are turning the situation around with a range of initiatives from new courses and more varied learning styles to rigorous assessment of pupils' progress through the levels in the attainment target for the subject. Schemes of work are being revised and need to include an element of local history with opportunities for fieldwork.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Overall, the quality of provision in information and communication technology is **good**.

### Strengths

- There are discrete ICT lessons for all pupils in all years.
- The management of, and teaching in the ICT courses is good.
- The network is effective and well managed.

### Areas for improvement

- The monitoring and use of ICT in other subjects is not sufficiently developed.

- The information provided in annual reports to parents does not contain enough information on attainment and progress and individual targets are not specific enough.

125. Standards by the end of Year 9 are good. All pupils in Years 7 to 9 follow a well-structured and well-taught course, which enables them to make good progress in all years. The scheme of work reflects the current guidance for ICT and pupils have opportunities to experience all the necessary aspects of ICT. In a brisk Year 7 lesson, where the majority of pupils were using a spreadsheet for the first time, they made good progress learning to use basic formulae to add, subtract and multiply. They formatted cells for currency and columns to make it easier to read and understand the data. All pupils were adept at adding headers and footers to identify printed work.
126. The GCSE ICT short course, which is taken by all pupils, has not yet been examined. Standards overall in lessons and in other work seen in Years 10 and 11 are in line with expectations. In some aspects of ICT, particularly text and image manipulation through the use of presentational software, pupils worked with confidence and much good work was seen. In a very good Year 11 lesson pupils were preparing presentations which enabled them to demonstrate some high level skills and an ability to combine elements from different programs to appeal to specific audiences. The teacher included a very good review in the lesson so that pupils were able to evaluate examples of their work, which were projected for the whole class to see and discuss.
127. Good teaching captures the interest of pupils in all years and builds on their very positive attitude towards ICT lessons. Most listen carefully to guidance and instructions and respond well to teachers' questions. They are keen to improve their skills and are thoughtful in the way they apply them in a wide range of contexts. They co-operate well when working in small groups and often help one another to their mutual benefit. Pupils are becoming effective independent users of ICT.
128. Teaching in ICT lessons in all years is good overall and often very good. Teachers approach their work with enthusiasm, which helps to engender a good working atmosphere and maintain good pace. Classroom management is good as is support for individual pupils, including those with special needs. Well-produced software guides are available for use in all lessons. Assessment is effective and used to inform planning; however, annual subject reports are not as helpful as they could be. They do not give enough information about progress and attainment while individual targets are not specific enough to help pupils improve. The department has coped well with a long-term absence due to illness. Supply teachers have become well established and are effectively briefed and supported with resources. Many well-produced departmental teaching resources are available for teachers and pupils to use via the college intranet.
129. Leadership and management of ICT are good. Significant developments in the ICT curriculum, in management of the department, in teaching, resources and in accommodation have ensured that improvement since the last inspection has been good overall. The use of ICT across the curriculum has developed since the last inspection but the improved ability of pupils to use computers is not yet being fully exploited by teachers in all subjects. Some subjects use ICT well, notably physical education and the SEN department. The use of computers in other subjects is not sufficiently developed, particularly in English, mathematics, geography, history, modern foreign languages and religious education. The use of ICT in subjects is not sufficiently systematic to improve learning. The recent curriculum audit of ICT use needs to be followed up at senior management level to ensure that shortcomings in subject provision are remedied.

## MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

### Strengths

- Some teaching is very good, using a wide variety of learning activities and appropriate resources.
- Assessment procedures are very good and pupils are developing their awareness of the standards they have achieved and what they need to do to improve.
- Leadership and management are very good, departmental review procedures are thorough and priorities for further development appropriate.
- The induction of newly qualified teachers is good.

### Areas for improvement

- Include opportunities for ICT development in the languages curriculum.
- Ensure that the very good teaching practice which occurs within the department is shared and employed consistently in all lessons.
- Continue to develop assessment tasks and lesson activities at different levels so they are appropriate for pupils of varying levels of ability, including those who are gifted or talented.
- Improve the motivation of pupils of all ages, especially in Years 10 and 11, in order to raise attainment and increase the number of pupils who choose to study languages in the sixth form.

130. GCSE results show that the pupils entered for French and those entered for German in 2001 achieved similar results in these subjects as they did in the average for all their other subjects. In 2002, French results fell significantly to well below the national average and German results also fell, but by a smaller amount. The fall in standards in both languages was in line with results gained in other subjects and similar for both boys and girls. The lower results in French reflected the lower level of prior learning of those pupils.
131. Standards in French and German are average in Years 10 and 11. Pupils' progress varies from class to class, with some good and the majority satisfactory. Teaching is satisfactory with some very good teaching in Years 10 and 11. Teachers establish good relationships with pupils and there is good discipline in most lessons; however, whilst French and German are used effectively in some lessons, there is too much reliance on English in most lessons. Some lesson activities to practise speaking are too mechanical, with predictable activities, containing no element of surprise to stimulate interest. Many pupils in this age group are reluctant to participate and, by providing too much support, teachers do not encourage independence.
132. Standards in French and German are average and improving in Years 7 to 9. The performance of pupils observed during the inspection indicates that the proportion reaching Level 5 at the end of Year 9 is in line with national expectations. The progress of pupils in both French and German in Years 7 to 9 is good. Their teachers encourage them to assess their own and each other's achievements and they think carefully about their work and what they can do to improve. Pupils of all ages and abilities are often passive in lessons and there are occasional examples of misbehaviour. Attitudes towards the subject are mixed, but good overall in all age groups; most pupils work hard to present their work well and to achieve.
133. Teaching is good in both French and German in Years 7 to 9. Lesson activities are varied, pupils are encouraged to be independent and good use is made of time. In one particularly effective lesson, a series of different activities was undertaken by groups of pupils, working on their own initiative and adhering to strict timescales. Most teachers use the target language most of the time, making good use of visual aids. For example, in one lesson, pictures of a popular cartoon family were used to enable pupils to describe their own families. All lessons conclude with a review, conducted by both teacher and pupils, of what they have achieved. The majority of marking is very helpful, containing both encouragement and guidance. Occasionally, however, when pupils are passive, teachers apply insufficient pressure on them to respond, especially when practising the spoken language. By providing too much support, teachers fail to give pupils enough opportunity to become independent in their learning.

134. The quality and range of the modern languages curriculum are good. Visits to both France and Germany are arranged and the cultural dimension of pupils' development is well supported by the department, helped by the fact that staff are fluent speakers of the languages taught. The support provided for pupils with special educational needs is good owing to the presence and commitment of a teaching assistant who participates in lessons. All pupils have an equal chance to do well and the department is conscious of the need to make the curriculum equally interesting to both boys and girls. Pupils do not have sufficient opportunity to use ICT facilities in lessons and are encouraged to use the Internet and word processors when doing homework.
135. The leadership and management of the modern languages department are very good and the plans made by the current head of department, who has been in post for less than a year, have the potential to improve performance in these subjects. Many good procedures have been introduced, the department's practices are clearly linked to overall college aims and the handbook has been completely revised. Internal review is a particular strength, including analysis of pupils' potential compared with their actual and predicted performance in GCSE, linked to the setting of individual targets. The priorities for further development of the subject are based on a clear view of what has (and has not) already been achieved. Good support is given to newly qualified teachers, whose lessons are monitored regularly. Staff within the department share a commitment to further development. Some weaknesses remain: there is still a small amount of unsatisfactory teaching, ICT is not yet deployed sufficiently in language lessons and the stated aims of the subject do not refer to the raising of performance standards. Nevertheless, there has been good improvement since the last inspection.

## MUSIC

Overall, the quality of provision in music is **good**.

### Strengths

- Pupils' achievement is good.
- The teachers are very able musicians.
- There is good management of the subject.
- There is an excellent programme of activities beyond the normal curriculum.

### Areas for improvement

- Standards at GCSE are below average.
- Assessment is not used sufficiently to improve the teaching.
- The time allocation for students in the sixth form is not sufficient to teach all aspects of the A Level course.
- There is insufficient teaching of music technology in Years 7 to 9.

136. GCSE results in 2002 were below the national average, reflecting pupils' prior attainment. Standards are well below average when the pupils enter the college and, although the pupils make good progress, the standard of their work remains below the expected level both by the end of Year 9 and the end of Year 11. By the end of Year 9, pupils perform and compose music and have an understanding of the contexts in which music is made. They use technical language with confidence and make good progress within their lessons, but the majority of the work that was seen during the inspection was below the expected standard. The work seen in Years 10 and 11 indicates that standards are still below the national average, although some of the music composed by pupils, particularly when they have been able to use ICT, is of a high standard.
137. Progress in Years 7 to 9 is good. For instance, in a Year 8 lesson on Ragtime, pupils learned to play a simple bass line with a melody and they made thoughtful appraisals of each other's work. Some played the music on the steel pans. In a Year 7 lesson, pupils worked hard to rehearse a piece composed by their teacher, which included improvising on a xylophone, using a scale found in Chinese music. The more able pupils achieve well and are encouraged to play their own instruments in class lessons. The less able also make good progress. All pupils have equal opportunities to develop their musical skills and there is no perceptible difference between the progress made by boys, girls or those with special educational needs.

138. Music plays a considerable part in the life of the college. A large number of pupils have lessons on instruments, including strings, woodwind, guitar and percussion. There are opportunities for them to play in a variety of musical groups, for various occasions in and out of college, and the standard of playing is high. There is also an excellent programme of enrichment activities in which different groups of pupils have workshops and coaching from specialist musicians.
139. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. In Years 7 to 9 the majority of teaching is good. All the lessons are very well planned, and the schemes of work have been thoroughly matched to the requirements of the National Curriculum. Teachers provide very good examples of musical playing and singing and the pupils respond enthusiastically to the challenges that are set. Teaching in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory. As more and more pupils have chosen to study GCSE music, the relatively large group sizes have meant that there is less opportunity for individual attention.
140. Leadership and management of music are good. Aims for the department are clearly defined, realistic and appropriate. There are very good relationships within the department and with staff in other departments. There is sufficient equipment for most of the music teaching, although there is at present too little equipment for music technology to be taught adequately in Years 7 to 9. Records are kept of the pupils' work, but more use could be made of these in order to tailor the teaching to the needs of individuals. Improvement since the last inspection has been good.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

### Strengths

- The quality of teaching is very good, with knowledgeable and enthusiastic teachers setting high expectations of pupils in terms of participation and behaviour.
- Pupil-teacher relationships are very good: pupils have a positive and lively attitude towards physical education and feel valued for both effort and achievement.
- Leadership and management of the department are very good.
- Lessons provide opportunities for all pupils to make progress.
- The assessment of pupils' progress is thorough and informs the planning of lessons and schemes of work.

### Areas for improvement

- Attainment at GCSE level; the department must continue to work on strategies to improve results.
- There is insufficient core curriculum time for physical education in Years 10 and 11.
- Lesson objectives need to be more explicit to make self evaluation easier.
- The participation of girls in some lessons and extra-curricular activities is unsatisfactory.

141. Nineteen pupils entered the GCSE examination in 2002 for the first time, but just two pupils gained a grade in the range A\*-C. This is well below the national average; however, a number of changes have been made to ensure that the results of current pupils are better. They are succeeding, as presently pupils are performing at the level expected nationally.
142. Standards at the end of Year 9 are average, as they are at the end of Year 11. This represents good achievement in the light of pupils' attainment at the start of Year 7. The majority of pupils in Years 7 to 9 are attaining at the level expected nationally. They are able to copy simple skills with control and co-ordination and are beginning to understand how to improve their own performance. The majority of pupils in Years 10 and 11 are also performing at the expected level. Most perform with precision and control and work hard at improving their performance. In all classes there is a wide range of attainment. Teachers manage this well through individual support, encouragement and different activities for groups of pupils according to their capability. As a consequence, all pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve well. Pupils have a lively, positive attitude to physical education and the majority make clear progress in lessons by listening carefully to the teacher and practising conscientiously as individuals and in groups.

143. Teaching and learning are good overall, and very good in Years 7 to 9. This is a major strength of the department. Teachers are knowledgeable and enthusiastic and teach lessons which are well structured, use a variety of activities and are conducted at a lively pace; however, the GCSE theory lessons are not always as inspiring for pupils as the practical lessons are. Teachers set high expectations of pupils in terms of both participation and behaviour and, as a consequence, pupils learn well in lessons. Whilst lesson planning is good, further improvements can be made by having clear and measurable lesson outcomes linked to simple, clearly defined teaching points which are reinforced throughout all the lesson activities. Pupils are very well behaved in lessons and respond well to the firm but friendly control exercised by teachers. Instances of unruly behaviour are very few and are dealt with efficiently and with a minimum of fuss. Teachers provide an environment in lessons in which all pupils, regardless of ability, gender or background, feel valued for both effort and achievement.
144. There were no instances of unsatisfactory teaching observed during the inspection, with the majority of lessons judged good or better. In an excellent Year 8 dance lesson, the very enthusiastic teacher used a range of effective teaching strategies which ensured that pupils were able to develop and demonstrate their chosen routines using timing, extension and spatial awareness combined with style and grace. Pupils made significant progress in another excellent lesson, a Year 10 badminton class, where the teacher used personal demonstrations, individual support and guidance and computer technology to very good effect. A very good Year 8 netball lesson showed that the majority of pupils could use space on court very well, could pass and catch the ball and pivot correctly. Year 11 basketball and netball pupils taking the examination course have acquired the necessary skills and knowledge to play as effective team members. In all lessons, teachers make supportive interventions, for example in trampolining lessons where teachers are able to show pupils clearly how to improve.
145. The time allowed for teaching physical education in Years 7, 8, and 9 is more than the recommended two hours but there is insufficient time in Years 10 and 11 where pupils who are not studying the GCSE course only have two periods per week. The excellent range of extra-curricular activities, clubs and college teams provides additional opportunities for pupils to enjoy sport and improve their skills despite the difficulties of running activities after college for pupils who have considerable distances to travel.
146. Leadership and management of the subject are very good. The head of department continues to raise the status and standards of physical education at the college and has developed excellent assessment procedures to record pupils' performance. The new procedures for establishing the extent of pupils' skills and abilities in Year 7 provide a very good basis for monitoring pupils' attainment and progress. Accommodation for sport at the college, including swimming, is very good and the planned appointment of a sports co-ordinator will add to the excellent staffing arrangements in the department; however, the small number of instances of poor participation in some lessons by girls needs to be tackled. The department has continued to make good progress since the last inspection.

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Overall, the quality of provision in religious education is **satisfactory**.

### Strengths

- Year 11 pupils achieve well in the GCSE short course examination.
- Marking of work and monitoring of progress is thorough.
- Links with local clergy and visits to places of worship are developing.

### Areas for improvement

- A sharper focus and brisker pace are needed in the short lessons to offer pupils more variety of learning activities.
- Only half the time recommended for covering the Devon Agreed Syllabus is devoted to the subject.
- Subject documentation and schemes of work need updating.

147. Standards at the end of Year 11 are average. All pupils follow the GCSE short course in religious education in Years 10 and 11. In the last two years over two-thirds of the pupils sat the final examination, which is a higher proportion than in most schools. The results were higher in 2001 but still below average at GCSE in both years. This represents satisfactory achievement in the subject overall.



The difference in relative performance of boys and girls was more marked in 2002, when twice as many girls achieved grades A\* - C.

148. By the end of Year 9 pupils' attainment is below average compared with national standards and their achievement in the subject is satisfactory. Pupils have only one lesson each week and no homework in which to develop ideas further. Pupils in Year 9 have a reasonable knowledge of what different religions believe about God and the standpoint of agnostics and atheists. Higher-attaining pupils are able to state some basic arguments for and against the existence of God, and some are producing extra work on aspects of Hinduism and Islam.
149. Teaching is satisfactory, as is the rate at which pupils, including those with special educational needs, learn. Marking is particularly good, providing regular feedback to pupils on their work. In Year 9 lessons, the teacher made good use of video material on Muslim prayer to help pupils appreciate the effects of religious teaching on a believer's way of life. The standard practice of exposition by the teacher, questioning and directed notes suits the higher sets best. Lower attainers need more variety of learning styles to help their understanding, and all need more opportunity to explore the significance of religious ideas and practice for their own lives. Short as the time is in lessons, better use could be made of it by a clearer focus on lesson objectives and by getting into the topic quickly to allow time for more pupil activity. When the teacher did not take sufficient account of pupils limited capacity for sustained concentration in a conceptually demanding Year 7 lesson on what it means to be human, some pupils lost interest and their behaviour deteriorated.
150. Satisfactory attention is paid to developing pupils' literacy, making sure they understand the meaning of religious terms and vocabulary, and correcting common mistakes in spelling and grammar. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 are well trained in making their own notes, as directed by the teacher. The range of pupils' writing is limited to notes and brief statements of their views by the brevity of lessons and the absence of homework. Similarly, limited time prevents ICT from being used to support learning sufficiently, except for occasional research, as in a Year 10 lesson investigating different branches of Christianity and Judaism. Good use was made of reference books from the library to research a topic on evil and suffering in Year 10.
151. In Years 10 and 11, the GCSE short course is now well established, although motivation is not high, particularly among some of the boys. In general, pupils enjoy the freedom to discuss moral issues, reaching conclusions by reasoned argument. In a very good lesson comparing the biblical and geological records of the origins of the world, team teaching by the class teacher and a Baptist pastor led to stimulating discussion. Pupils raised a range of faith questions they wanted answering and showed their appreciation with spontaneous applause at the end. The style of teaching, which combines class discussion with note-taking, is effective in covering the syllabus in the short weekly lesson and occasional homework. Pupils make good progress in lessons, assisted by helpful marking of their notes. In their writing, they expressed their own views well on who is to blame for the suffering in the world, taking into account Christian teaching on the Fall. Lower attainers are not given sufficient opportunity to consider religious teaching on moral issues. In the higher sets there is greater orientation towards the examination, with the expectation of extra work. Apart from coursework, there is little requirement for most pupils to produce extended writing that would improve their ability to argue the case for different sides in moral issues.
152. The introduction of the GCSE short course for all pupils has raised standards since the previous inspection. This satisfactory improvement is jeopardised by the reduction in time for the subject in recent years and the consequent pressure on the department. Whilst marking is thorough there has been little progress on assessment, which does not clearly identify the levels at which pupils are working.
153. Leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. Religious education has separated from humanities this year and is in the process of establishing itself as an autonomous department. Not surprisingly, much has yet to be done on departmental documentation, sorting out the subject handbook and policies, and updating the schemes of work, including taking account of new initiatives such as

religious education's contribution to citizenship. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory.

## PART E: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

In the inspection, five subjects and courses were inspected and are reported on in detail. Work in other subjects and courses was sampled and contributed to the overall picture of teaching and learning in the college.

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2002

### ***GCE AS Level courses***

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average points score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art & design	2	100	*	100	*	120	*
Biology	1	100	*	0	*	40	*
Business	3	33.3	*	0	*	13	*
Communication studies	4	75	*	0	*	60	*
Drama	3	100	*	33.3	*	73	*
English literature	2	100	*	50	*	70	*
Psychology	4	100	*	0	*	70	*
Environmental science	1	100	*	0	*	80	*
Sport/PE	1	100	*	0	*	80	*

### ***GCE A Level and AVCE courses***

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average points score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art & design	2	100	*	50	*	90	*
Business (double)	5	100	*	37.5	*	190	*
Business (single)	3	100	*	0	*	67	*
Communication studies	11	91	*	45.5	*	78	*
Drama	3	100	*	33.3	*	87	*
English literature	13	100	*	30.8	*	83	*
Geography	2	100	*	0	*	70	*
Mathematics	1	100	*	0	*	80	*
Music	5	80	*	0	*	32	*
Sociology	7	100	*	28.6	*	71	*
Sport/PE	1	100	*	0	*	60	*

***Intermediate vocational qualifications***

Qualification	No in final year	% gaining qualification		% gaining merit		% gaining distinction	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Leisure & tourism	7	71.4	*	71.4	*	0	*
Manufacturing	7	71.4	*	42.9	*	0	*

## SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

### MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

154. Mathematics and biology were inspected in detail and work in environmental science was sampled. Environmental science has been running for one year. In 2002 there were 10 students taking the AS examination and all obtained a grade of A to D with almost half the students obtaining the higher grades. Students achieved very well in relation to their results at GCSE. One lesson of environmental science was seen which was very good. The Year 13 students were developing an understanding of genetic engineering and the benefits and issues associated with a gene pool. The students rose to the challenge of extending their understanding. Examination-type questions were used to develop the skills of precise answering and understanding the examination requirements.

#### Mathematics

Overall, the quality of provision in mathematics is **good**.

##### Strengths

- Teaching is good with some very good features.
- Students have excellent attitudes and work hard.
- Collaboration with the local grammar school is good.

##### Areas for improvement

- Increase in the numbers wishing to study mathematics at A Level.
- Offer training for the teachers at the college to teach A Level effectively.

155. Collaboration with the local grammar school has enabled students to study A Level mathematics in the past two years. In 2002, one student achieved grade C at A Level and three students now in Year 13 achieved a B and two C grades at AS Level. A small group of students also took GCSE as a re-take, with a similar proportion to nationally improving sufficiently to achieve a C grade.

156. The teaching of AS Level in Year 12 and A Level in Year 13 is good and takes place at the grammar school. The one female student in Year 12 intends to take AS only for one year, and to concentrate on English and Business Studies in Year 13. She found the AS course very difficult at first, as did the three Year 13 students last year. Although achieving grade A at GCSE, the big jump to advanced study was compounded by no experience of calculus. The first term concentrates on pure mathematics, and this student made good progress, improving her attainment by hard work and a commendable effort, remarked on by both her teachers. She attends extra voluntary sessions after college, when her teachers give individual help and support. In the observed lesson she contributed fully to a discussion of method and answers, in reviewing homework on all topics covered. This was to be ready for a 'mock' examination the following week leading into the first external module examination in January. She now feels confident with methods of differentiation and integration, and her file showed accurate use and calculation of maxima and minima. Early work on Pythagoras' theorem and trigonometry showed secure knowledge and understanding; recent work on trigonometric identities and equations was competent, with good sketches of the trigonometric functions.

157. The three Year 13 students, one female and two males, took two modules of pure mathematics and one of mechanics in Year 12, and found mechanics most difficult, giving them the lowest marks. One student intends to study mathematics at university and will be re-taking this module. Students are currently making good progress with both pure mathematics and statistics. Discussion with these students revealed a preference for statistics, as the teacher relates theory to real-life examples making the subject come alive. Good knowledge and understanding of correlation coefficients was evident; students could describe and use the method of calculation. One had found the range of methods of complex differentiation and integration difficult to understand until recently, after lessons going through a variety of questions and applications. In the observed lessons all students contributed well, explaining methods and answers to the rest of the class. The textbooks used are good, and teachers mark work thoroughly, with worked corrections and constructive comments.

158. Provision includes a GCSE re-take class and key skills 'Application of Number', both held once a week. Attitudes and attendance in the GCSE class are poor, and attainment varies widely in the work on circle problems. The small key skills group had full attendance, related well with the teacher, worked well on calculations with formulae, and showed understanding of graphical methods, appreciating the more relaxed adult feel of the sixth form.
159. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Leadership is good, providing clear direction for the subject; management is satisfactory with sufficient monitoring to identify and take action to improve.

## Biology

Overall, the quality of provision in biology is **good**.

### Strengths

- Teachers have very good subject knowledge, high expectations of students and link concepts to everyday examples to aid learning.
- Teachers give good support to students and promote very good relationships.
- Good resources are available to the students.

### Areas for improvement

- Encourage students to give fuller oral answers.
- Improve the quality of marking to provide clear guidance for students to follow to raise standards.
- Organise students' writing and notes to consolidate new and recap previous learning.

160. Biology was introduced to the college curriculum in September 2001 with the first student taking the AS Level examination in 2002. There is no national data against which a comparison can be made but the result was lower than expected.
161. The standard of work of the current Year 13 students early in the year is below average, although students are reaching levels consistent with expectations based on Year 12 results. The college has an open policy for entry into the sixth form and students who studied science to foundation level at GCSE are given the appropriate support to cope with the more demanding work at AS Level. Hence, their achievement is good. The current number of students continuing from the AS examination to the A Level is low owing to the greater popularity of the environmental science course.
162. Students have a solid understanding of proteins and lipids and are able to assemble the information in a suitable order to answer an essay question. They are also able to compare the pathways of nervous and hormonal reactions; they are weaker when using experimental method skills. The standard of work of the current students in Year 12 seen in lessons is average in terms of new information covered. They are coming to understand cell division at the molecular level. They use technical terms correctly with answers in suitable depth but have a weak general biological knowledge and hesitant recall of work covered in earlier years. This is hindering their progress.
163. Teaching is good overall with some very good and excellent features and this is resulting in current students making good progress. The very good subject knowledge of teachers, evident in their answers to students' questions, enables students to understand difficult concepts. Strengths in the best lessons are the good challenge that is given to the students, with careful use of question and answer to extend their understanding. Questions are often linked to the examination requirements. In this way they focus students' attention on key assessment objectives at the same time as developing their understanding. Teachers have very good relationships with students who respond very well to challenging teaching, show interest in the subject, work hard and help one another. Teachers give freely of their time outside lessons to help students and this is greatly appreciated. Weaker aspects of teaching are seen in lessons that are dominated by the teacher, as when the teacher was filling in and developing answers rather than drawing them from students. In this way the teacher missed opportunities to develop students' competence in formulating hypotheses. Teachers give good oral feedback in lessons but do not routinely provide students with guidance in marked written work. Consequently, students are not always aware of their level and what is needed to raise it to the next level. Some weak organisation and study skills that slow the progress of some students are overlooked.

164. Much of the written work teachers expect of the students is in the form of personal note-taking. The quantity of work completed by the students is good but they do not always organise it in a way that aids revision. The range of skills they use is limited, with little use of highlighting and sub-titling for example; however, they annotate examination questions effectively. Teachers do not provide sufficient structured questions in a variety of forms to ensure students consolidate understanding and learning. Students are not required to keep a record of their own progress, and teaching does not revise GCSE level work that a number of students have forgotten.
165. The leadership of the department is good. The course has only been running for one year and an analysis of the first year's work is already leading to modifications that are helping students make better progress. There is a commitment to building on what has already been achieved and to improving standards.

## **ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING**

166. No subjects in this area were inspected in detail, but work was sampled in manufacturing. This GNVQ course provides an opportunity for students to extend the skills developed during their earlier design and technology studies. The emphasis is on the process of manufacturing. It is taught through a more in-depth study of the existing courses including particularly, resistant materials and food technology. Previous results have included several merit grades at intermediate level.

## **BUSINESS**

167. Work in business studies and law was sampled. Provision for business studies is good. Students on the advanced vocational course are working with confidence and making good use of external resources like Young Enterprise to develop their skills and knowledge.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

168. No subjects in this area were inspected in detail, but work was sampled. Provision for ICT is good. Most students are making good progress and are becoming effective autonomous users of ICT. Some students use the Internet well for research but other do not have the skills to refine or extend searches for information. All students have the opportunity to follow an accredited key skills course at an appropriate level. Standards achieved by pupils on this course are at least consistent with expectations and sometimes good, particularly in the use of word processing and presentational software.

## **HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL**

169. No subjects in this area were inspected in detail, but very good work from students' portfolios was seen in leisure and recreation.

## **HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE**

170. This subject was not inspected in detail, but good teaching was seen in two lessons

## **VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA**

171. Provision for music is satisfactory. Students study music technology. In 2002, four of five students achieved a pass grade. This represents satisfactory achievement. The quality of the teaching is satisfactory. Demonstrations are clear and helpful. Students would make better progress if they were required to work with the music technology equipment during some of their time for free study.

## Art and design

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

### Strengths

- Teaching and the achievement of students are very good.
- Leadership and management of the department are very effective.
- Excellent relationships promote students' positive and mature response to lessons.

### Areas for improvement

- The accommodation for ceramics and three-dimensional work needs re-organisation.
- Students should be recruited onto a wider range of courses.

172. 2002 saw the first students completing the A Level. One of the two students was awarded the highest grade and both made good progress from their AS Level results. There are many more students following the A Level course this year. The proportion of students gaining the higher A and B grades in the AS examination in 2002 was significantly higher on the photography course than the fine arts course. More than half of the students did better than expected from results in their GCSE examination. The numbers taking AS Level courses were more than four times higher than the previous year. With the increasing student uptake of courses, the very good teaching and very good achievements of students seen during the inspection, the department is establishing a very successful programme in the sixth form.

173. From work seen during the inspection, standards are above average and students achieve very well in lessons. The students' visit to Paris enriched their understanding of many important artists and the culture within which they worked. They made rapid progress and brought back very good supporting studies in their sketchbooks, which are being developed into some high-quality finished work. They research their chosen artists well and write extensive notes. Although the standard of annotation is not so high as the standard of creative work, students nonetheless work hard to write up their research and use extensive notes to support and enhance the work they prepare for the examination. Year 12 students explore the professional standard computer software available to them and are beginning to understand the great range of possibilities for digitally manipulating images. In Year 13, some very high standards of sketchbook research into surfaces, materials and processes are in evidence, with good accompanying notes. They study a wide range of well-known photographers, such as Henri Cartier-Bresson, the Parisian photographer Brassai and the Italian photographer of natural forms, Barbieri. Their personal studies are presented to a high standard. They are confident in working independently in the photographic darkroom, testing exposure limits and controlling the tones in their work.

174. The quality of teaching is very good in the large majority of lessons. It is never less than good. Teachers have a very good knowledge and understanding of their subject areas and have very high expectations of the standard of students' work. Students are very positive and are committed to their studies. They are confident and mature in working and are clearly enjoying a very positive learning experience. Relationships are excellent and enable a relaxed, but focused and purposeful atmosphere to be built up in the lessons. In a tutorial lesson, students were able to share their critical understanding of each other's work, being treated as young adults with important views to offer. Photography lessons are well prepared and students taught to work safely and independently in the darkroom. All lessons are managed very well to enable the maximum independence of students, whilst ensuring that expert support and guidance is always available through individual or group and whole class interventions.

175. The department is very well led and managed, benefiting from strong, clear leadership of a very good team of teachers who work well together to raise standards. The technician, who gives limited support to the department, is himself art trained and is able to engage with both teachers and students at a professional level. There are well-prioritised plans to improve examination standards and to increase the numbers going on to A Level courses. Although space for teaching is good, the accommodation is in need of refurbishment and re-organisation to make the best use of available space. The area for



ceramics and three-dimensional work is cramped, and facilities for the storage of students' work are unsatisfactory overall.

## HUMANITIES

176. Sociology was inspected in detail and work was sampled in psychology, history and geography. The first AS Level psychology candidates were examined in 2002, their results representing satisfactory achievement. One lesson was seen in which teaching was very good and students' answers showed a good understanding of the work. The first A Level history candidates are now in Year 13. They are reaching a high standard of work in their essays and presentations. They are being well taught and are making good progress towards achieving their expected grades at the end of the course. In geography, two students attained A Level passes in 2002, achieving well in relation to their results at GCSE. One lesson of Year 13 geography was observed during the inspection. It was very well planned, and very good teaching methods together with excellent student attitudes resulted in very good learning.

### Sociology

Overall, the quality of provision in sociology is **good**.

#### Strengths

- Students' attitudes lead to good learning.
- The teacher's knowledge and understanding of the subject ensures good standards.

#### Areas for improvement

- Make use of the Internet as a tool for research.
- Extend the size of the department by attracting more students to the subject.

177. At present there are no Year 13 students studying sociology. It was therefore only possible to observe one Year 12 lesson during the inspection and to sample the work of Year 12 students.

178. Standards are in line with national expectations. In 2002, seven students entered for A Level and achieved grades indicating broadly satisfactory progress from their attainment at the end of Year 12. Two gained B grades and all the others achieved a passing grade of C – E. The group taking AS Level in 2002 consisted of three students and their progress was hampered by an unsuitable video conferencing course that has now been discontinued; therefore, although one student gained a grade B, none of them has continued to A Level. There is a group of 14 studying for AS Level, one student having transferred to a more suitable course at an early stage. Students generally make good progress from GCSE. More female students than male study the subject and more females attain the higher grades. This broadly reflects differences in their attainment at the start of the course.

179. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is good. Teaching draws on excellent specialist knowledge to convey ideas in an interesting way. The most capable students show a clear understanding of sociological topics and ideas and can express these clearly through notes, diagrams and essays. They can discuss and assess the work of various sociologists and draw conclusions from a variety of information. They assimilate knowledge well. The less successful students are keener to talk than to listen to the views of others so they learn less thoroughly. A small number are still restricted by weak literacy skills leading to disorganised work which will not serve them well when the time comes for revision. There is little evidence that the students have started to use the Internet to research and access up-to-date social data. Gifted and talented students are progressing well and are on track to gain the highest grades.

180. The students have very positive views of the subject and the progress they are making. Most choose to study sociology because they are interested in gaining a new perspective on society and several see it as being useful in their proposed careers.

181. The subject is well managed by the single subject teacher, with good planning and documentation in place and records kept of students' progress. The department is relatively new and has quickly overcome the initial problems associated with some unsuitable course provision. Sociology is already building a good reputation amongst the students. With its enthusiastic leadership it has the capacity to attract a larger group of students and to become a strong and successful department.

## ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

182. English literature was inspected in detail and work in drama, communication studies and French was sampled. In their study of Greek Theatre, Years 12 and 13 drama students make a good link with the conditions of Trojan women with refugees today and present their drama in an imaginative, empathetic and thought-provoking way.
183. In the first A Level examinations in 2002, students achieved well in communication studies. One lesson was seen. Teaching and learning were very good and the students demonstrated a good understanding of the texts and topics they were studying and exploring.
184. There has yet to be any A Level French results; the first students are now in Year 13. They are making very good progress, achieving above average standards.

### English literature

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

#### Strengths

- Standards are rising and examination results are improving.
- Students are offered a rich curriculum.
- Teaching is consistently very good, with teachers knowing their subject very well and having a good understanding of their students' needs.
- Students learn very well; they are good at working together in pairs and in groups.
- The subject is led and managed well and there is good assessment and monitoring of students' work.

#### Areas for improvement

- Recruit more of male students.
- Help students to become more independent learners.

185. Standards achieved in 2002 in A and AS Level examinations indicated very good achievement. Thirteen students were entered for English literature of whom four achieved high grades of A or B; the others achieved grades of C or D. The results show a steady improvement and a rising upward trend since the sixth form started. Girls' achievement is better than that of boys, but mainly girls take up the course.
186. The observation of work during the inspection confirms these standards. In a Year 13 lesson, students demonstrated that they are becoming increasingly aware of how Shakespeare uses language to develop the complexity of characters in his plays. Using their previous experience of the study of *Macbeth* and *Romeo and Juliet*, they were able to make predictions about *Othello* and to sequence the plot in a logical manner. They know how Othello fell from his elevated position and rose to be a tragic hero. Year 12 students are developing a good understanding of issues concerned with women and feminism and their representation in earlier and present writing. They know how different religious, social and cultural attitudes are reflected in language. They are building a good understanding of the requirements of AS and A Level examinations, although their independent learning skills are not well developed; however, the students are keen and participate fully in their learning.
187. Teaching is very good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and use it well to support the learning process, balancing pair and group discussions with appropriate interventions. They make clear the complexity and stages of processes and consolidate previous learning. They have good and friendly relationships with their students, whom they know well, and plan their lessons to meet their individual needs effectively. They engage them well in discussions, helping them along by building on their interests and experiences particularly in relation to their choice of assignments and projects. They monitor and evaluate students' work well and guide them on how to improve. They also make good links with spiritual, moral, social and cultural development in their teaching.

188. Leadership and management of English are good. A good system of monitoring and evaluation is in place. There is good assessment and support of students. Rich curriculum provision benefits sixth form students and enables them to sustain interest and learn better. Resources for English are good.