

INSPECTION REPORT

Aldercar Community Language College

Nottingham

LEA area: Derbyshire

Unique reference number: 112939

Principal: Mr A W Cooper

Lead inspector: Dr F H Mikdadi

Dates of inspection: 10th - 13th November 2003

Inspection number: 258547

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of students:	11-16
Gender of students:	Mixed
Number on roll:	908
College address:	Daltons Close Langley Mill Nottingham
Postcode:	NG16 4HL
Telephone number:	01773 712477
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr K Armstrong
Date of previous inspection:	27 th April 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE COLLEGE

Aldercar Community Language College is an average sized 11-16 mixed comprehensive school with 908 students divided between 456 boys and 438 girls. This figure is a significant increase on the last inspection when there were only 408 students. 12.6 per cent claim free school meals which is below the national average of 16.1 per cent. The proportion of students with special educational needs (18.7 per cent) is in line with the national average (18.1 per cent). At 6.1 per cent the proportion of students with statements of special educational needs is well above the national average of 2.4 per cent. The college also has an inclusion unit that caters for students with physical disabilities as well as another that caters for students who are hearing impaired. Students' attainment on entry has fluctuated but is currently below average. The number of students with a home language other than English is very small (0.03 per cent). The college is predominantly white with seven students from an ethnic minority background. The immediate area of the college, where most students live, is relatively disadvantaged. The socio-economic background of the majority of the students attending the college is low. The college, having gained Language Specialist Status, has a thriving modern foreign languages department offering French, German, Spanish, Japanese and Chinese in Key Stage 3. The number of students opting to study modern foreign languages in Key Stage 4 is large. British Sign Language is also taught.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
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9391	Dr Norma Ball	Lay inspector	
32208	Derek Aitken	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
30749	Heather Boyle	Team inspector	Physical education
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7854	Richard Crozier	Team inspector	Music
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23487	Patricia Kitley	Team inspector	English, English as an additional language
33235	Pauline Pitman	Team inspector	Special educational needs
31672	Tony Porter	Team inspector	
4475	Keith Remnant	Team inspector	Geography
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a good school that has made significant improvements in its students' achievement. Students' attainment by the end of Year 9 is in line with the national averages and it is above by the end of Year 11. Given the low prior attainment of students on entry, this indicates good progress. Teaching is good overall. The principal provides strong and inspirational leadership with his relentless drive to improve standards. The college provides good value for money.

The college's main strengths and weaknesses are

- GCSE examination results are above the national averages and students' performance for their ability has increased consistently over the last few years.
- Good teaching caters successfully for students of all abilities.
- Accommodation is unsatisfactory, especially in science, art, music and physical education, and spoilt further by untidiness, lack of care and a lack of proper maintenance.
- Standards in mathematics are below average.
- Provision is at least satisfactory and mostly good in all subjects other than ICT where it is unsatisfactory, as improvements are very recent.
- Links with parents and the community are very good.
- This is an inclusive, warm and caring college, where the principal's very good leadership sets an example.

Improvements since the last inspection have been good. Financial stability has been achieved with governors working effectively to help the college with its long term financial planning. The key issue concerning enhancing standards in modern foreign languages has been turned into a strength of the college and a source of pride. Management in physical education and provision for music has been improved. Work set now matches the students' differing needs.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Performance in GCSE/GNVQ examinations at the end of Year 11.	all schools			similar schools
	2000	2001	2002	2002
	A	A	B	A

*Key: A - well above average; B - above average; C - average; D - below average; E - well below average
Similar schools are those whose students attained similarly at the end of Year 9.*

Students' achievement is good overall. In Year 9 attainment by students is in line with the national averages in science, slightly below in English and below in mathematics. By the end of Year 11 overall attainment is above the national average. Students make good progress because of the good teaching which adds considerable value to their education.

Students' personal qualities are good. Despite some cramped conditions, students behave well and they show a good attitude to their studies. A less positive aspect is their tendency to create litter around the buildings and in recreation areas. **Provision for the students' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is good.** They are helped to develop into generally responsible and mature youngsters. Attendance is satisfactory.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of the students' education is good.

Teaching is good in almost every subject area with some shortcomings in teaching and learning in Years 7 to 9. As a result of the good teaching students, including those with special educational needs, achieve well.

The college offers a good curriculum to its students. All students get opportunities to follow studies that match their differing capabilities. Links with parents and with other schools and colleges are very good. All students who need help are given it by teachers who work very hard to offer support in and out of the classroom.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership is good. The principal offers visionary and strong leadership which inspires others to share his ambitions for enhancing students' achievement. Management is satisfactory. Senior managers are approachable and they are respected by college staff. Most subject leaders share the vision for enhancing achievement. Governors offer effective support as well as challenge to senior managers. They have not ensured that the college carries out its statutory duty to provide a daily act of collective worship.

PARENTS' AND STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE COLLEGE

Parents and students are happy with the college's provision. Parents believe that the college has succeeded in enhancing their children's learning. Students are justifiably proud of their college, though a significant minority are not happy about the state of some accommodation.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

The most important things the college should do to improve are to

- Raise standards in mathematics and in the use of number across subjects.
- Work with the local education authority to raise the quality of accommodation, and with students to prevent litter spoiling their environment.
- Enhance provision in ICT especially in years 7 to 9.

and, to meet statutory requirements

- Ensure that a daily act of collective worship is offered.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

By the end of Year 9, students' standards of attainment are **average** in most subjects and **above average** in science and geography. They are below average in a few subjects, including English, mathematics and ICT. By the end of Year 11, standards of attainment are above average in science, design technology, geography, history and physical education. They are below average in English and mathematics. Given the below average prior attainment on entry to Year 7; students make good progress in reaching these standards. This is good achievement. All students do well in this inclusive college regardless of gender, ability or ethnic background.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well in their time at the college.
- The highest standards are in science and geography.
- Competence in mathematics is unsatisfactory in its use across the curriculum.
- English language and literacy skills are good and show very good progress by students.
- Students' achievement in ICT in Years 7 to 9 has been unsatisfactory. Attainment should be higher.
- Achievement of students with special educational needs is very good.
- There are continuing high standards in Japanese.

Commentary

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 9 – average point scores in 2002

Standards in:	College results	National results
English	33.1 (31.3)	33.3 (33)
Mathematics	32 (31.4)	34.7 (34.4)
Science	33.3 (33.3)	33.3 (33.1)

There were 155 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

Standards in GCSE/GNVQ examinations at the end of Year 11 in 2002

	College results	National results
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	55.6 (62.1)	49.9 (48.4)
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	95.1 (95.5)	90.9 (90.9)
Percentage of students gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	97 (99)	96 (96)
Average point score per student (best eight subjects)	42.4 (44.9)	39.8 (39)

There were 81 students in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

1. When students arrive in Year 7 their overall level of attainment is below the national average. With the college becoming more popular this profile is improving as more able students apply to study at Aldercar. At this stage, the college receives a relatively smaller number of high attainers than most colleges.

2. By the end of Year 9 attainment varies amongst subjects. It is largely in line with what is expected nationally of most students. In the Year 9 National Curriculum tests levels of attainment in 2002 were broadly in line with the national averages in science, slightly below in English and below in mathematics. In all three subjects there were significant improvements in the summer of 2003. These results represent a good achievement because of the low prior attainment on entry to the college.
3. The standards currently reached in English are average in Years 7 to 9, are above average in science and geography and below in mathematics. Standards are average in most other subjects. However in art and ICT standards reached are below average. The college is aware of this and knows the reasons for it which, in ICT, are largely to do with non-specialist teaching. Measures are being taken to enhance standards.
4. GCSE examination results have improved significantly since the last inspection. The proportion of students gaining five or more GCSE grades A*-C rose from 39 per cent at the last inspection to 55.6 per cent in 2002 and 56.1 per cent in 2003 although both these figures were a drop on the high 62.1 per cent of 2001. Despite the drop in the two subsequent years, the value added was higher as the prior attainment of the 2002 and 2003 cohort was well below average on entry. Lower attaining students have also improved their performance. Almost every student leaves Aldercar with five or more GCSE grades A*-G. GCSE results at the college were above the national average in 2002.
5. Current standards in Years 10 and 11 are largely average. They are above average in several subjects including science and physical education but below in English and mathematics. These standards are an improvement on the last inspection.
6. Language skills are well developed by the college. Students enter with low communication skills and make significant improvements. However, numeracy remains underdeveloped and students' standards are low.
7. There are many factors that contribute to the students' good achievement. Amongst these are the principal's leadership in promoting high standards, the teachers' hard work and deep care for the students and the good work that the college does in enhancing students' self esteem from a low ebb on entry.
8. Students with special educational needs make very good progress. Monitoring of individual education plans for students, in all three areas of special educational needs (learning difficulties, physical disability and hearing impaired), is systematic and effective in analysing progress against targets set. The annual review process, which fulfils statutory duties, provides a forum for discussion where students' and parents' views are listened to and acted upon. Progress against objectives in the statement is very good. The Physically Impaired Unit efficiently records students' progress which allows parents and students to measure the small steps towards progress. Hearing impaired students are monitored using a check list inside classroom folders. Mainstream staff are involved in the process by providing feedback for review purposes.

Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Overall the attitudes, values and personal qualities which students develop are **good** and attendance and punctuality are **satisfactory**. Good provision is made for students' moral, social and cultural development and spiritual development is satisfactory so that students develop a mature manner and conduct themselves well.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students behave well in the majority of lessons and around the college.
- Some challenging students can interrupt lessons in a minority of classes.
- Students like their college and express their pride in it.
- There is a strong emphasis on building confidence and self esteem.
- Litter is widespread and there is some vandalism.

- Relationships between staff and students and between students themselves are very good.

Commentary

9. Attendance is satisfactory and this profile has been maintained by the college since the last inspection. Punctuality is also satisfactory. Students do their best to arrive at lessons on time although moving around buildings at times of lesson change can be difficult because of the crowding in confined corridors and on stairs. Good procedures have been put in place to reduce the opportunities for truancy in college and rapid follow-up of any absences is well used to maintain the attendance at a level which is similar to the national average as well as to reduce the level of condoned absence that was noted at the time of the last report. The education social worker is well used by the college to support their efforts towards regular attendance.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
College data:	8.0	College data:	0.8
National data:	7.8	National data:	1.2

The table gives the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year for which national figures are available.

10. Students are proud of their college and express a sincere liking for it. The behaviour of students in the vast majority of lessons is good. They are able to work well both independently and in groups and show good attitudes to their studies. Students especially enjoy discussions and share their ideas and opinions well together. For example in a Year 7 personal, social and health education lesson, when considering why laws were needed in society and at what age should the full force of the law be applied to those who do wrong, all students contributed thoughtfully and enthusiastically. There are some very challenging students who are mostly well managed by teachers. When engaged in enjoyable and well-paced lessons they participate well and show good achievement. However, when they are not well motivated they can lose interest and become distracted. The learning opportunities of the whole class are affected as the teacher seeks to manage the poor behaviour of a few. This was especially noted in some Year 9 classes. The college is taking steps to provide additional support for the Year 9 lessons. Around the college, especially at break times and during the lunch period, there is a very good community atmosphere. A less positive aspect of behaviour and attitudes shown by students is the careless disregard for litter and some minor incidents of vandalism. Despite initiatives by staff and also the School Council, the buildings and outdoor recreation areas are untidy.

11. Students mix in a friendly and relaxed way and enjoy each other's company. Although there were tensions observed during the inspection because of the very congested dining hall at lunch time and the confined areas in some corridors and on staircases, the vast majority of students show good-natured tolerance and manage the difficulties of the accommodation well. The students are aware of the very high standards of behaviour and attention to their work that is expected of them and the vast majority meet these expectations well. Very good procedures are in place to deal with bullying and any form of racial harassment. Students know that such behaviour is unacceptable and are confident that it is dealt with firmly and fairly by the college. Parents and students drew attention to bullying in their questionnaires but the inspection revealed that when incidents did occur, they were well managed and quickly resolved. Relationships between students and staff are also very good. There is a clear emphasis on the promotion of self-esteem and confidence among students to help them learn and to mature. Most students accept responsibilities well and carry them out sensibly; for example, although not all forms are represented on the College Council those members who attend take their responsibilities very seriously.

12. Students are helped to develop a clear understanding of themselves, the routes to a healthy and happy lifestyle and the responsibilities of being a member of a community. They understand, and most respect, the rules that apply in college and value being part of a happy and caring community in which every person is respected. The provision made by the college for social and moral development is good. Cultural development is also good and promoted well through a number of

subject areas, especially religious education, history and geography. Students know about different cultures and faiths in the world and have respect for those whose lives and beliefs are different. The social, moral and cultural development of students has improved since the last inspection and an important contribution has been made to these areas by personal, social and health education and also the development of citizenship studies. Spiritual development is satisfactory. There is no formal act of worship on a regular basis in the college; nevertheless students do have meaningful chances to share in moments of deep feeling and they explore complex and emotional issues, for example in a Year 11 English lesson when the hardships and sacrifice of the Great War and the use of gas as a weapon were considered. The very strong commitment of the college to full inclusion of all students regardless of any disability is evident and fully valued at all levels in the college and in all aspects of its work. It is at the centre of what the college stands for and the way day-to-day life is conducted so that it forms a spiritual heart to the college.

13. The number of exclusions in the last reporting year was high for those given a fixed period exclusion. This was caused mainly by the college adopting a policy of zero tolerance of the offence of smoking. This has been effective as the number of students excluded in the current year has dropped from the high number at the same period last year.

Ethnic background of students

Exclusions in the last college year

Categories used in the Annual College Census	No. of students on roll	No. of fixed period exclusions	No. of permanent exclusions
White – British	814	110	4
White – Other	2	0	0
Mixed - White and Black Caribbean	1	3	0
Mixed - White and Black African		0	0
Mixed - White and Asian		0	0
Mixed - any other mixed background	3	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian		0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi		0	0
Black or Black British - Caribbean		0	0
Black or Black British - African		0	0
Chinese	1	1	0
Any other ethnic group		0	0
Parent/student preferred not to say		0	0
Information not obtained		0	0

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

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE COLLEGE

This is a very inclusive college with a **good** learning ethos. Teaching and learning are mostly good. Curriculum provision is good. Students are well cared for and effectively supported. Partnership with parents and the community are very good.

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching is **good** overall. In almost every lesson seen the quality of teaching was at least satisfactory. Teaching and learning are better than at the last inspection. Assessment is satisfactory and marking is almost always well done.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- In Years 10 and 11 teaching overall is good in almost every subject and very good in geography.
- Teachers show considerable enthusiasm for their subjects and they have very high expectations of their students.
- Teaching has been unsatisfactory in Years 7 to 9 in ICT.
- Students receive very good individual support.
- The data available are inconsistently used to show students how to improve their performance.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 145 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
3 (2%)	25 (17%)	64 (44%)	49 (34%)	2 (1%)	1 (0.5%)	0

The table gives the number of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons; figures in brackets show percentages where 30 or more lessons are seen.

14. The quality of teaching is good. Good teaching is evenly spread across the college. In lower school ICT, students have not made sufficient progress over the last two years. Current standards of students and evidence from their work indicate unsatisfactory teaching in that time. It is too early to judge the impact of a recent specialist appointment but early indications are already positive.

15. Teachers know their students well. They expend a great deal of energy on giving individual support both in and outside the classroom. Students feel free to approach their teachers for support and help at any time. Many teachers give extra tuition during breaks and after school.

16. Teachers show considerable enthusiasm for their subjects. They encourage students to do well and have very high expectations of them. Where teachers are assisted by other adults, they use them very effectively.

17. Assessment is largely satisfactory. Marking is prompt and consistent. Teachers pay considerable attention to helping individual students. The main area for development in assessment strategies is the need to give students clear advice on how to improve further, which teachers do only inconsistently. The large amount of data available on individual students are not consistently used in planning lessons or in helping students improve further.

18. The special educational needs department ensures that all subject departments have copies of relevant individual education plans and, as a result, teachers are aware of the diverse needs of students.

19. Staff use support effectively and working relationships between teachers and the educational care officers (ECO) are good. For example, ECOs give support for science teachers to develop differentiated Year 9 assessments by rewriting materials so that they are accessible to special educational needs students. This promotes inclusion and supports these students in making very good progress. In modern foreign languages, a hearing impaired student used British Sign Language effectively to develop a third language, was included in sensitive questioning and was able to respond orally. In mathematics, a student with an attention deficit hyperactivity disorder was offered very good support from the teacher and ECO. A contract is drawn up to help the self-management of behaviour while teaching methods ensure that there is full attention from the special educational needs student before teaching commences. These clear objectives support student inclusion and progress.

20. Within the enhanced support resource for physically impaired students, teachers make very effective use of technology to enhance access to the academic and social curriculum. All students have their own symbol-based timetable. In a Year 10 and 11 humanities lesson, very good pre-lesson preparation of symbols enabled students to use their specialist resource to describe journeys to holiday destinations. Occasionally, for some students accessing mainstream lessons, the technology gets in the way of learning. For example, in a history lesson, the student and ECO were overly concerned with recording information rather than eliciting what the student understood about Roman soldiers.

21. In the minority of occasions where students with challenging behaviour are unsupported, progress is limited and their behaviour impacts on the learning of other students within the classroom. For example in Year 9, in art and Japanese, a small group of boys disrupted the quality of both lessons. Pastoral staff, in conjunction with the special educational needs department do not sufficiently address this minority disruption.

The curriculum

The curriculum is **good** overall with innovative features which provide access to all students. Students with special educational needs have very good provision. Timetable weaknesses disadvantage some students.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A wide range of appropriate courses and an inclusive policy enable all students to have access to the whole curriculum.
- Accommodation is unsatisfactory.
- The college caters very well for students with special educational needs.
- The choice of science options is very good for all students with appropriate classes for all ability groups, in double science, separate sciences and certificated courses.
- The delivery of ICT is satisfactory across the curriculum but ICT as a discrete subject is unsatisfactory.
- Too many (split) classes in core subjects are taught by a variety of teachers.

Commentary

22. The curriculum in the college is good overall as it is broad and balanced and designed to meet the needs of all students. Provision in English for students in Years 7 to 9 is good but very good for students in Years 10 and 11. Appropriate extension activities and additional classes extend learning opportunities for all students. A very good range of courses enables every student to achieve success in science. Each of the core subjects is disadvantaged by timetable weaknesses where students can be taught a single subject by up to three teachers.

23. Provision in art, citizenship, design and technology, history, personal, social and health education, physical education and religious education is good throughout the college and it is very good in geography. A good curriculum is offered in modern foreign languages throughout the college where students have a wide range of established language courses from which to choose. Good

liaison with primary schools enables students to have 'tasted' languages such as Japanese before they arrive at Aldercar. All other subjects are satisfactory with the exception of ICT. While the teaching of ICT is at least satisfactory in each of the subject areas, it is unsatisfactory when taught as a discrete subject. Provision for physical education is good but is limited by students having no access to swimming, rugby or tennis because of the lack of appropriate accommodation.

24. Curriculum programmes for students in Years 10 and 11 are wide ranging and well developed to allow all students to gain accreditation at a level appropriate to their needs. All students are able to take GNVQ or vocational GCSE (VGCSE) courses in addition to GCSE courses. A full range of VGCSE courses is available. Some students are able to take GCSE examinations early, so allowing them to take additional GCSE exams in other subjects. In science, the more able students have the opportunity to take GCSE in Year 9 then study separate sciences, while lower achieving students take suitably accredited courses. An innovative system, whereby Aldercar staff teach selected courses at the local college, encourages students to continue their education post 16. Links with colleges enable some students to begin doing courses in technical and vocational skills at NVQ level such as in design and technology.

25. The curriculum in modern foreign languages is particularly extensive with almost all students studying two languages in Years 7 to 9. Students taking GCSE Japanese a year early are able to start an AS course in Year 11 or take another subject such as art. There are a range of short courses as well as full courses on offer. A personal, social and health programme provides for the teaching of sex and relationships education and a full time medical officer is available on site. A specialist health practitioner, who is a member of college staff, is involved in the teaching of alcohol and drug issues. All statutory requirements are met but there is no act of collective worship. There has been a good improvement in the curriculum since the last inspection.

26. Provision for students with special educational needs is very good. An extremely positive aspect is the integration into the whole curriculum of students with quite severe difficulties including those who are physically disabled coming from special schools. All students have access to all subjects either within mainstream classes or within the inclusion unit in cases where it is more appropriate. Provision is made for their individual needs in terms of specialist equipment or in the tailoring of courses to their particular needs. Students with reading ages below their chronological age are withdrawn for basic skills tuition in the literacy suite. Students, such as the hearing impaired, for whom two foreign languages are considered inappropriate are given extra curriculum time within the inclusion unit. External accreditation is open to all students either through GCSE or VGCSE examinations. Where it is more appropriate, students can take Entry Level qualifications. Students with severe physical or learning difficulties are very well supported with additional staff. However, some students with challenging behaviour, more usually boys, do not always receive additional staffing support where needed.

27. Work experience opportunities are good, well planned and greatly valued by students. An imaginative citizenship programme enables students in Year 10 to visit colleges or residential homes to teach a skill such as counting to ten in Japanese to infants during three weekly lesson times. This introduces them to many responsibilities prior to their two-week work placement in Year 11. This well-planned programme encourages all students, including those with special educational needs, to spend at least one of their weeks working in a business closely associated with their vocational course (VGCSE). The college is part of a pilot project set up by Derbyshire Education Business Partnership (DEBP) to enable efficient liaison between college and business.

28. Out of school activities are good overall. There is a good range of lessons out of hours which enable students to continue their learning for pleasure or for additional examination accreditation. These are well supported. Visits to places of academic and cultural interest are good but rely heavily upon individual subject areas such as geography field trips or English theatre trips rather than as part of a whole college planned initiative. A good range of clubs and societies is available. Girls are more actively engaged in a range of sports than boys. The college puts on a production at least once a year but there are relatively limited opportunities for students to experience many arts or cultural pursuits. Planned programmes for the gifted and talented are still in the early stages of development.

There are exceptions to this. For example, nineteen students were identified as gifted and talented and entered a year early for GCSE Japanese. The majority of these students attained the highest grade.

29. Staffing is good. Across the college teachers are well qualified, knowledgeable about their subjects and experienced. The teacher to student ratio is better than the national average and this has been used effectively to create smaller teaching groups in some subject areas. This in turn has contributed to higher attainment. The number and deployment of support staff, including educational care officers, is also good. In special educational needs they have been well trained and the provision for students with complex needs is very good. Technician support in science, design and technology and ICT is also effectively used and allows teaching staff to concentrate on teaching and learning.

30. Even though staff work hard to minimise the negative impact on students' learning, too many aspects of the buildings are unsatisfactory. The exterior of the building is poorly maintained. It creates an atmosphere which is drab and depressing and does not appropriately reflect or reward the commitment of both staff and students. The college has attempted to alleviate some of the problems by, for example, installing air conditioning in some south facing rooms, but others remain poorly ventilated and stuffy. This does impact negatively on teaching and learning. Science laboratories are old and have inadequate access. There are also too many science lessons which are taught in classrooms. In physical education the gym is undersized and has leaking roofs. This can be distracting for students being taught. In the same room, restricted sight lines can make supervision of students difficult. In music the accommodation is particularly poor. Practice rooms are very small, have no ventilation and no glazed doors. However, English, modern foreign languages and special educational needs all have accommodation which is good.

31. The overall level of resourcing across the college is satisfactory. In modern foreign languages the provision of resources, and particularly ICT, is very good. In special educational needs there are also good ICT resources with plentiful hardware and software well matched to the needs of the students and the curriculum. However, in English there are insufficient books and those that are available have to be shared between classes. The library has not grown in line with the increasing roll of the college. It does support wider reading resources but other stock is out of date and largely unused.

Care, guidance and support

The college provides a caring and supportive environment that encourages full inclusion of all students. Support and advice based on monitoring is **good** and good arrangements are made to canvass the views of students.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Staff assign a high priority to the care and welfare of students and know them well.
- Child protection and first aid are very well managed.
- Careers education and the personal, social and health education programme are well structured and provide good support for students.
- Agencies are well used to support the care and guidance provided by the college.
- Whilst good, overall monitoring is not always used effectively to inform teaching and set targets.
- Unsatisfactory buildings and their repair and cleanliness give rise to some health and safety concerns.

Commentary

32. Staff assign a high priority to the care and support of students in their care. Child protection matters are led with a clear sense of their importance by a very experienced and committed senior member of staff who ensures that all staff are well briefed in dealing with any concerns that they may identify. First aid cover within the college is good and sensible arrangements are made for students who are unwell. During the inspection a number of health and safety concerns arising from the poor

state or repair of the premises and general cleanliness were reported to the college. The premises and grounds show signs of a lack of care and routine maintenance over a long period of time and students noted aspects of this as the most significant thing they disliked about their college. Regular inspections of equipment are carried out. During the inspection a fire drill was carried out demonstrating that efficient and sensible procedures are in place.

33. Staff know students well and provide consistently good guidance, advice and support. Within the pastoral system, senior staff and tutors move up through the college with the same year group and build up good relationships and a depth of knowledge and understanding about the students for whom they are responsible. Staff on the senior management team also know the students in their care well and provide good support, linked well with other pastoral staff. Staff give generously of their time in helping students with any problems or concerns that they may have. Students are aware of and value the care provided by staff and express confidence in being able to confide their problems and concerns. The strength of the relationship with students and the level of commitment by staff are an important feature of the college.

34. Monitoring of the personal development of students is good and enables staff to guide and counsel students appropriately. Although there is some variation in the rigour and clarity of targets set for students, overall the quality is good and students have a clear idea of where they are although there is insufficient guidance on how they make improvements in what they do and achieve. The personal, social and health education and careers education programmes are well structured and provide an appropriate range of good and well-organised information for students. The Connexions staff are valued members of the college community and their guidance is valued by students. Students are given good opportunities to put forward their views, principally through the School Council which meets on a very regular basis. Council members have proposed a number of important suggestions for change and improvement in the college such as more seating areas outside and more security coverage of the college inside. These have been implemented and it has been possible for students to have a positive impact on college life. In lessons too the views and ideas of students are encouraged so that they grow in confidence, able to express their views and know that they will be respected.

35. Arrangements for the settling of students into the college in Year 7 are very well managed and the extensive links with a large number of primary schools are well used to ensure a smooth and less stressful transition for students into secondary education. Students are known as individuals before they arrive in Year 7. Good care is taken to inform and guide students in their GCSE and vocation course choices for Year 10 and later in choices for further education or training after students leave the college. Links with post 16 colleges provide increasing good support for students and encourage more students to continue their education beyond Year 11 and ensure a smooth transition to this next stage.

Partnership with parents, other colleges and the community

The very strong relationship with parents is a key feature of the college. Parents are provided with a clear and helpful range of information and staff work consistently to involve parents fully in their children's education. Links with schools and colleges are **very good**, well maintained and used effectively to support students when they transfer.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents have very positive views about the college.
- Information is very clear and useful, including the details of children's progress and achievement in reports.
- Parent support and attendance at events and functions are not always high.
- Links with other schools and colleges are very well developed and used with great effect.
- Clear vision for future improvement in partnerships is shown by governors and key staff.
- There are very close links between the college and local groups in languages and performing arts involving college students and staff, and community partners.
- Vocational lessons in college and in the local further education college are working very well as a blueprint for future expansion on the college site.
- Sports and recreational activities involving the community are under-developed, as college facilities are poor.
- The college has maintained very good and effective links with parents since the last report.

Commentary

36. Parents are very pleased with all aspects of the college including good teaching, the way the college is led and managed and the strong encouragement by good teachers for students to work hard and gain in maturity. They are also pleased that their children make good progress. However, although parents are pleased with all that the colleges does for their children, they are often reluctant to become closely involved with the day-to-day life of the college, with curriculum initiatives that are run from time to time or even the social and fund raising events of the Parents' Association. The college works very hard to maintain and improve even further the positive partnership with parents and the impetus for the strength of the partnership lies mostly with the college. Parents are kept well informed about what is happening by regular letters and information from the college, year groups and departments. The prospectus and governors' annual report to parents are excellent and have improved since the last inspection so that they now provide valuable and very helpful information for parents. Equally informative and well designed are the annual reports on progress. These reports are well set out and have clear information on what students know and can do as well as how hard they have worked and what they have achieved. Reports set targets for improvement and provide parents with a good clear summary of progress and the way ahead. The views of parents are sought on a range of issues on a regular basis. Procedures for dealing with complaints are very efficient and any complaints or concerns are very well handled by the college.

37. The contribution of the community to students' achievement is good overall. Governors and principal show very good vision in determining the college's strategy to help in raising the aspirations of the local community. The college has developed a diverse range of links, which are very effective in several areas including languages, performing arts, humanities and work experience. Several theatre groups perform in the college, and college students perform in local theatres and feeder primary schools. Several partners, with whom the college has established active and trusting relationships, greatly enrich college activities and help students achieve. The college is making a major contribution to expanding the vocational curriculum so that it better meets students' and local employers' needs. Whilst the college is a focus for the community in languages, shown in the adult and feeder primary school evening classes and frequent drama performances, provision in sports, leisure and recreation is under-developed due to the poor sports facilities currently available. There are, however, ambitious, well-funded plans to radically improve facilities – indoor and outdoor – for future college and community use.

38. Liaison with local primary schools is very good and well established. The links are with a large number of schools. Regular visits are made all through the year by staff from the college. Curriculum links are developing and students also visit the schools as reading 'buddies' and contribute to the geography and history curriculum. The transfer arrangements are good and induction days carefully organised so that Year 6 students can begin the process of being integrated into a much larger community with a good degree of confidence. Students in interview confirmed that the transfer was good and, although it was strange to be in a far larger community, they did feel well prepared. Staff

links are being extended with sixth form colleges in the area and teaching staff often work in two colleges, providing a very visible bridge between the two stages of education. The linked provision for a number of curriculum subjects is very well organised and, like the relationship between the local family of schools, it is professional, supportive and vibrant.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The college principal provides very strong leadership, giving the college a clear sense of direction. Management systems throughout the college are **satisfactory**. The governors support and challenge the management team. Overall, their contribution to the school is **good**, though they have not complied with the statutory requirement regarding collective worship.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The college principal has a relentless and visionary drive to raise standards for all. He is highly respected and valued by the local community.
- Development and workload of staff are well managed.
- Governors provide good strategic direction.
- The language college development plan is very progressive and has made a substantial contribution to students' achievement.
- Many whole-college systems are not consistently used or fully in place.
- The college's evaluation of its performance lacks sufficient rigour.

Commentary

39. The college principal is a powerful role model for the college; he leads by vision and example. He is extremely committed and maintains a high profile around the college and in the community. He knows the college well including individual students and provides strong support for his staff. He is highly respected and liked by all. His role modelling helps the leadership group to work well.

40. The senior leadership team works closely and well with the principal and governors to realise their vision for the college. They are a cohesive team whose members work well together, support staff and maintain a high profile around the college. Staff feel that senior managers are approachable. The college has good strategic direction and ambitious plans for development. There are areas where leadership is good for example in the dissemination of very clear guidelines, however, in other areas such as the monitoring of teaching and learning procedures, are less well developed.

41. A key role of the leadership group is curriculum leadership that oversees the work of the heads of department. These managers have a pivotal role in the college's procedures for improving the quality of teaching and learning. The college pastoral system is organised on a key stage basis, yet whilst the system is appropriate it does not effectively track and monitor the academic and pastoral needs of individual students in a way that allows teachers to tell students how they could improve their performance.

42. The quality of leadership at departmental level is variable. It is very good in science, geography, and modern foreign languages. It is good and effective in English, mathematics, art, citizenship, history, physical education and religious education. In other subject areas leadership and management are at least satisfactory. All heads of department share a common purpose or vision and there is a very strong commitment to every child as the college addresses the inclusion agenda with rigour and enthusiasm.

43. The quality of leadership and management of special educational needs is very good. As a result, these students make very good progress. The management of the enhanced resource for physical impairment is good and exploits resources to the full. There is a will to increase inclusion by ensuring, over time, that there are enough well-trained staff to promote equality of opportunity and to support students within a quality, mainstream, inclusive curriculum. Similarly, students who are deaf and hearing impaired have full access to the curriculum and benefit from opportunities to explore

their cultural identity and develop British Sign Language. Classes in British Sign Language are also offered to staff and students during after-hours clubs. Training days and twilight sessions have ensured that inclusion is high on the agenda within the college. There are also very good links with outside agencies and the special educational needs governor ensures the quality of provision, including for those with complex learning difficulties and high care needs.

44. Overall the governing body provides good leadership and through its work supports the senior management team well. The last inspection report stated that the governors were a small core who were very supportive of the college but overall lacked clear curriculum and financial understanding. This issue has been dealt with and the current governing body has a good understanding of these important areas. An increase in the number of governors has allowed for the structure and organisation of committees to be reviewed and improved. These are now good, the governing body knows the college's strengths and weaknesses and decisions are made with a greater focus upon student needs and raising standards. The governing body has a clear understanding of its role and has a good balance of expertise and experience. The two main sub-committees deal effectively with finance and staffing issues and ensure that educational provision complies with all statutory requirements except that relating to collective worship.

45. The recent appointment to the college of a finance manager has helped to improve further the understanding and rigour that governors have about financial control and monitoring, through regular meetings. Despite all the hard work the college still has vacancies on the governing body for two parent governors.

46. The college manages its financial resources appropriately and has a clear understanding of its financial position. The finance manager, who is a member of the leadership team, ensures that all decisions are fully linked to financial resources and enables the college to make the best possible use of capitation and resources.

47. There have been many changes in staff deployment since the previous inspection but this has stabilised recently and a growing pattern of continuity has resulted in rising achievement.

48. The senior management team needs to be more consistent in monitoring and assessment and to allow for regular reviewing and up-dating of existing policy and practice. This will allow the management group to be able to move the college forward even further.

Financial information for the year April 2001 to March 2002

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	2,070,971.39
Total expenditure	1,970,642.39
Expenditure per student	2677.50

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	-280,000
Balance carried forward to the next	-179,671

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING, SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 and 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Two Year 10 drama lessons were observed. Standards of work for both the Foundation and Intermediate level GNVQ course are **above average**. Students, including those with special educational and behavioural needs, have **very good** attitudes to their work and are well supported by experienced teachers.

Provision in English language and English literature is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The department has improved results in national tests taken at fourteen. Results in GCSE examinations are below the national average.
- Students benefit from the good teaching and teacher subject knowledge.
- Students are enthusiastic and willing to take an active part in lessons.
- Good leaderships are developing a strong departmental ethos.
- The management of the department is satisfactory. There is a need for greater consistency in monitoring the effectiveness of initiatives so that their impact on raising standards can be measured.

Commentary

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Average	Below average
Achievement	Good	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Examination results

49. Results in the 2002 national tests taken at fourteen are average compared with national and similar colleges. Indications are that there has been a significant improvement in 2003. The standards achieved in GCSE English and English literature are below average. Students generally make better progress in their other subjects, but more students are entered for both examinations than is found nationally. In 2002 all students were entered for English, and all achieved a grade. Girls do better than boys in both national tests, but the gap is narrowing. The evidence of students' work indicates that there is little difference in attainment between these groups in lessons.

Standards and achievement

50. Students make good progress to achieve average standards at the end of Year 9. They have good techniques for analysing literature because they read a wide range of high quality poetry, plays and fiction. High attaining students use a wide range of vocabulary and selected perceptive quotations in their writing about 'The Gresford Disaster'. Average attainers write at length and used

ICT well to design covers for their Gothic Horror stories. Lower attaining students rewrite information accurately, for example in newspaper articles.

51. By the end of Year 11, students develop confidence in selecting the appropriate style for writing about a range of tasks. Higher attainers use research effectively to persuade readers to support different views on capital punishment. Average attaining students use technical terms well but sometimes explain plot or character in too much detail when they write about literature. Lower attainers are less confident in their use of quotations, but their writing about War Poetry makes clear comparisons between poems. Current Year 11 students make satisfactory achievement, when their previous attainment is taken into account.

Teaching and learning

52. Students in Years 7 to 11 benefit from knowledgeable teachers. Lessons are planned well with a good range of activities that challenge and interest all groups of students, including those with special educational needs. Students' attitudes to the subject are very good. This is reflected in the high level of participation in discussions in lessons, and in the high number of students who complete coursework in Years 10 and 11. In the best lessons, teachers encourage students to work independently. For example, in a Year 8 lesson students were confident to suggest possible meanings for actions in 'Spit Nolan' because very good questioning techniques by the teacher, and other adults in the room, ensured that they thought through and explained answers. In a very good Year 11 lesson, similar techniques were used effectively to extend lower attaining students' use of imaginative language to describe a miserable place. In a small proportion of lessons, committed English teaching is made less effective because not enough time is allowed for students to extend and share their ideas.

Leadership and management

53. Leadership of the department is good. There is a collaborative ethos, morale is high and new staff feel valued. Management is satisfactory. Marking and assessment are good. However, there is a need for greater consistency in monitoring the effectiveness of initiatives so that their impact on raising standards can be measured.

54. Improvement since the last inspection is good. The department has invested time, library resources and curriculum development to improve standards in reading. Informative and well-structured booklets widen younger students' reading choices. Students speak highly of the support they receive in the basic skills unit and the gifted and talented reading club. Standards for students in Years 7 to 9 have improved substantially as a result of curriculum changes made to meet the needs of the Key Stage 3 strategy, although these improvements are not yet secure in terms of raising GCSE examination results. Expectations for boys' achievement are consistent and high, and the gap between their performance and the girls' performance is narrowing.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

55. Provision for teaching English language and literacy across the curriculum is good. As a result of activities linked to the college's specialist language status, staff in most departments have good language awareness. There are well planned opportunities for role play, discussions, debate, as well as for students to comment on each other's work, in English, citizenship and drama. Good language awareness is promoted in science, art, design and technology and geography; however, there is a reluctance amongst some staff to use technical terms in music. More students are entered for higher tier papers in mathematics at GCSE because of the good support for reading. Staff in design and technology have simplified the format and word level of worksheets to help students work independently, and work is carefully matched to the needs of different groups of students in history and religious education. The quality of presentation of written work is a strength in many subjects.

English as an additional language

56. The college has made satisfactory provision for the few students with another language at home. Care is taken to differentiate between language and any other educational need. Support for

this group of students through the Policy for Racial Equality and Cultural Diversity Action Plan is in the early stages of implementation.

Modern foreign languages

Provision in modern languages is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good GCSE results in Japanese in 2003.
- Students’ attitudes to learning European languages show significant improvement.
- The curriculum provides rich and diverse opportunities for all students.
- Insufficient focus is placed on monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching and learning.

Commentary

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Below average	Average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Very good

Examination results

57. Standards in teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 are well below average in the European languages with most students attaining level 4; there is, however, a slow upward trend and some of the results reflect an over-cautious approach to assessment. These teacher assessment results had not been recalibrated against the new criteria and are therefore unreliable.

58. Candidates for GCSE in French and German have been increasing steadily over the last three years with no detrimental effect on standards which have stayed in line with national averages since 2000. Standards in Japanese at GCSE are high. This year 50 per cent of candidates who sat the examination in Year 10 gained A-A* and all candidates gained the higher grades.

Standards and achievement

59. Overall, standards of work seen are below average in the European languages in Years 7 to 9. Students study two languages from Year 7, mainly in mixed ability classes. The pace of lessons is steady and teachers’ pastoral concern for their students is evident. This encourages lower attaining students to progress, although tasks are not fully adapted to their needs. Skilled learning assistants support students with physical impairments very well. Fast-tracking arrangements are progressively developing opportunities for higher attaining students. Relationships are good and the rich variety of provision is motivating students. Teachers are careful to develop students’ competence in all the skills and students concentrate well in class. Homework, however, is not used rigorously enough to compensate for the shorter time allocation and the very good ICT resources are not yet being exploited to best advantage to advance learning. Overall, in the European languages achievement is satisfactory. Standards in Japanese are above average in all skills except speaking.

60. Standards in European languages are average in Years 10 and 11 as teaching is more consistent and students benefit from a full time allocation for their GCSE language. Increasing linguistic competence is supported by opportunities to study Spanish within the popular and well-taught GNVQ course. A few students take full advantage of these rich opportunities to study three languages to GCSE. Students are attentive and productive and this is reflected in their well-

organised files. As a result achievement is good. Standards in Japanese are high as a result of very good teaching which enables students to proceed at a fast pace and work towards an AS qualification in Year 11.

Teaching and learning

61. Overall, teaching and learning are good. They are very good in Japanese in Years 10 and 11. Teachers provide opportunities for individual students to improve the quality of their pronunciation and intonation; this is not consolidated or extended fully for students in the earlier years, however. Foreign language assistants help teachers monitor oral practice and work usefully with small groups. Teachers use a wide variety of high quality visual aids to present and practise vocabulary and structures and regularly assess progress in lessons. Mime and gesture are especially well used in Japanese to enable students to link written forms with pictures and sounds, and promote understanding. Teachers make useful links with prior learning and lesson objectives and the purposes of activities are clear to students. Plenaries to reinforce the acquisition of new language are not so well used. Marking is variable in quality and is insufficiently linked to levels and grades to guide students.

Leadership and management

62. Leadership is very good. It is aspirational with a strong sense of purpose and has had a major impact in raising the profile of modern languages in a short time, both in the college and the wider community. Improvement since the previous inspection has been very good. The diverse curriculum provides many opportunities for students in all years and supports the inclusive focus of the college. Management is satisfactory. Staff collaborate well to fulfil their responsibilities on a daily basis but there is insufficient rigour in monitoring, evaluation and use of data to ensure consistent high quality and to support continuing improvement in the next phase of development.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in Years 9 and 11 are below average.
- Poor presentation leads to errors in working and affects progress.
- Teachers explain work well and students are clear what they have to do in most lessons. Just occasionally, work that is too hard restricts students’ progress.
- Good class relationships create a positive learning ethos.
- Students with special educational needs make good progress in lessons because work is well matched to their capabilities and they are supported well.
- A strong sense of common purpose and good teamwork amongst the staff reflect good leadership and management.

Commentary

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Below average	Below average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Satisfactory

Examination results

63. In the 2003 national tests for Year 9 students, nearly three-quarters of students attained the standard expected for their age, and one half of students exceeded it. This was a marked improvement on 2002 and students achieved very well. At GCSE, the proportion of higher grade passes fell compared to previous years and results overall are likely to be below average once national comparison data becomes available. Girls do slightly better than boys but the gap between their performance is narrowing.

Standards and achievement

64. Standards on entry to the college are below average. Work standards in the current Year 9 and Year 11 classes are below average but students make satisfactory progress and achievement is satisfactory overall. Most Year 9 students have average skills in number but lower attaining students make mistakes when working in their heads because they do not recall basic addition and subtraction facts accurately. Where work involves graphs or diagrams, such as the construction of angle or line bisectors, poor presentation affects the achievements of many students because it leads to unnecessary errors. Higher attaining Year 11 students achieve well in their examination coursework. They use a wide range of statistical techniques to investigate "What is an average Year 11 student?" They explain well how errors in measurements influence their results and some understand the bias that samples of data drawn from a wider base may introduce to their results.

Teaching and learning

65. Teachers know their subject well. For instance, a good explanation of how to draw reflected shapes built well on students' previous knowledge of algebra and graphs and enabled them to tackle their work confidently. However, occasionally work is too hard. A lesson on simultaneous equations, for example, was only partially successful. Although students appeared to understand the technique explained at the start of the lesson, they were unable to apply it when working on further examples and made limited progress.

66. Adults and students get on well, which leads to relaxed, but lively, purposeful lessons. Students' positive attitudes contribute well to their achievements because, even when work is difficult (for instance in a lower set lesson on division) they behave well, enabling teachers to focus on resolving difficulties without undue distractions of class management.

67. Teachers plan effectively for students with special educational needs. High quality support for hearing impaired students and good understanding of the needs of others with behaviour and learning difficulties were significant factors in a very good lesson where students made good progress in learning how to calculate areas of shapes made up from rectangles.

68. Occasionally, teachers do not involve students actively enough or give them opportunities to use their initiative and to work at their own pace. Where this happens, students spend too much time copying worked examples from the board and they show little interest in the lesson.

Leadership and management

69. All mathematics teachers share a common vision for the future and have high aspirations. Leadership sets an example of commitment to raising standards. Extensive assessment records ensure that teachers have a very clear view of students' progress, from which they identify underachieving students of all abilities and set up additional lessons after school to help students catch up. National initiatives for mathematics have been successfully absorbed into college practice, although they have yet to work fully through the college. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. Results in Year 9 tests and in GCSE examinations have improved, but there is still some way to go to reach average standards at both stages.

Mathematics across the curriculum

70. Students' mathematical skills are underdeveloped and insufficiently used across subjects. Some students make satisfactory use of mathematics skills in some subjects, for example analysing the results of science experiments using graphs, and in well-presented data handling work in English and technology to present results of surveys and other research done as part of coursework.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Levels of achievement shown by examination results are very good.
- The leadership of the department's dedicated staff is very good.
- A well-developed learning culture enables students to progress well.
- The production and use of a comprehensive student database aids achievement.
- A wide range of curricular option choice meets student needs.
- Teaching style lacks variety in some lessons. Opportunities for investigative work are limited.

Commentary

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Above average	Well above average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Examination results

71. Results in the Year 9 national tests in 2002 were in line with the national average, but better for higher levels. The department's results are well above those of similar schools. Further significant improvements occurred in 2003, with results which are well above the targets set for the department. There is little difference between the performance of boys and girls. GCSE results for the higher grades of A*-C were well above the national average in 2002 for both single science and double science and similar good results were also obtained in biology, chemistry and physics. This pattern has been repeated in the recent 2003 results.

Standards and achievement

72. In lessons, students are achieving well, based on their earlier entry attainments, which were below average. They take pride in their work and information is always well presented in their books. They are generally interested and receptive to the teaching and are always well behaved in lessons. As a result, they readily make progress. More able students in Year 8 confidently identified the names of elements in a range of chemical formulae and gave the names of associated compounds. Word and symbol equations for the burning of magnesium were also correctly produced by students in a middle ability set. In Year 11, students in a lower ability group showed a willingness to demonstrate the construction of series and parallel circuits and could describe relevant properties of these.

Teaching and learning

73. In Years 7 to 9, students are taught by knowledgeable teachers. Lessons are planned well, with clear teaching and learning objectives and the pace and pitch matches the abilities of the students. In the one very good lesson at this level, teaching skilfully extended the learning of the students by challenging their existing levels of knowledge and understanding, so developing higher order thinking skills. Evidence of students' work and their achievement indicate that teaching is generally good. In Years 10 to 11, high quality teaching was observed, including two excellent lessons which were delivered with flair and enthusiasm and with a good sense of humour. Students are constantly encouraged and motivated to produce their best efforts, both in lessons and for further learning at home. As a result, good progress is made by nearly all students. In some lessons, students had to spend too long listening to the teacher. This reduced the time available for more active learning activities, including practical work. Very good working relations are present, and students work co-operatively with each other and relate very well to students with special educational needs. This was particularly true in those classes with physically impaired students, who are supported by well-briefed teaching assistants.

Leadership and management

74. The department is very well led, with a clear vision and direction for the department. The curricular needs of all students are very well met by the range of courses available for Years 9 and 11, including those identified as academically gifted and also for those less able students who are able to follow an "Entry Level Certificate" course. Management responsibilities are well covered. Clear documentation and well-developed schemes of work have been produced and are updated as required. An excellent student tracking system has been developed by the department and this is well used to advise the students, and their parents, of progress in the frequent end of module tests. It is also used to guide the teaching. Since the last inspection, attainment levels have improved resulting from higher standards of teaching, although some inconsistencies in levels of marking were found. Staffing difficulties caused by illness and attempts to provide appropriate levels of teaching for all groups, are only partially successful. The unsatisfactory standards of accommodation, together with inadequate ICT provision for science need to be addressed by the college.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in information and communication technology is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership of the department is very knowledgeable and developing an effective and challenging curriculum.
- Students' achievement by the end of Year 9 is unsatisfactory.

Commentary

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Below average	Average
Achievement	Unsatisfactory	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Unsatisfactory	Good

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Unsatisfactory

Standards and achievement

75. By the end of Year 9, students' standards of ICT capability are below average overall; this represents unsatisfactory achievement. Most students have confidence in managing their files on the computer network and use a variety of software tools effectively. A good example of this is the project in Year 9 where students investigate the organisation and costing of a college coach trip. This project draws upon the main strands of ICT knowledge and reinforces and extends the knowledge that students have acquired through Years 7 and 8. By the end of Year 11 standards are average. Students on double unit GCSE courses have very well developed ICT skills across a range of applications. In addition to the traditional skills of presentation, data manipulation and modelling, students make effective use of the Internet and compile and use e-mails.

Teaching and learning

76. The best lessons seen were lively and well paced and had clear learning objectives. Students were actively engaged in activities that captured the interest of students of all abilities. Those with special educational needs learn at a rate similar to all other students. Positive learning environments are created by the good attitude and behaviour of the students and the purposeful relationships between students and the teacher. Evidence from students' work shows that for some students, lessons are far less rigorous and knowledge and understanding are underdeveloped.

77. During the inspection no Year 10 lessons were observed and the newly appointed teacher for Years 7 to 9 was not observed due to illness. Teaching in Year 11 is good, using knowledge and experience to challenge and extend the learners. Students benefit from the high expectations and respond positively to the challenging activities. Assessment is used effectively to motivate students and to set targets for future improvement. However, one of the best features of the teaching is the capacity that students have developed for independent learning; as a result of good teaching, students have the ability to apply knowledge and understanding effectively.

Leadership and management

78. The department is satisfactorily led. Teaching inconsistencies that existed before the appointment of a new ICT specialist have had a significant impact upon standards; however, the management of the department and support by senior managers and technicians have minimised and are still minimising this impact. Since the previous inspection there have been considerable improvements in the ICT resources, and changes to the Year 7 to 9 curriculum as a result of the implementation of the new national ICT strategy; however, the impact of unsatisfactory teaching has resulted in unsatisfactory progress overall.

ICT across the curriculum

79. Since the last inspection, the college has made a substantial investment in computers and related technology, which has resulted in a ratio of computers to students that is in line with national expectations. In many subjects the use of computer whiteboards is making lessons more exciting and captivating for students, enabling the teachers to bring the Internet into the classroom. The college has identified ICT as a major focus in their development plan and the infrastructure is now in place to make effective use of computers throughout the college. In subjects such as art and design, computers are being used with digital cameras to create digital compositions, in design and technology, students use software to design electronic circuits and in modern languages students make extensive use of computers to create and edit text in their target language. A particular strength is the way that students with a wide range of special educational needs use laptops and ICT devices such as 'voice' boxes to communicate and present their work. The impact of ICT is beginning to be seen throughout the whole college, it is improving teaching as teachers use the technology to bring lessons to life and it is improving the achievement of students because of the confidence and capability that they now have to access, present and record information.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students in Years 10 and 11 achieve very well because of very good teaching.
- Relationships between staff and students are very good.
- The quality of leadership is very good with clear vision for the subject.
- Marking is inconsistent and lacks information on how students can improve their work further.

Commentary

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Above average	Above average
Achievement	Good	Very good
Teaching and learning	Good	Very good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Very good

Examination results

80. Results in GCSE examinations were above average in 2002 and are continuing to improve. Overall girls attain better results than boys; nevertheless the boys results are above the national average. Both boys and girls attain better in geography than many other subjects in the college.

Standards and achievement

81. Year 9 students, in 2002, achieved average standards, this was an improvement from the last inspection when standards were below average. From observations in lessons, from looking at students' work and from discussions with students attainment is now judged to be above average. By the end of Year 9 students have a good understanding of the interaction between human and physical processes. Using this understanding together with their developing skills of mapping and handling data their achievement is above average in presenting reasoned arguments relating to difference in the economic development of various countries. By Year 11 they are carrying out quality investigations such as the work related to shopping in Nottingham Castle Marina and Heanor. They collect and present a range of information to support arguments and well-substantiated conclusions in their work, which for many is well above average.

Teaching and learning

82. Students throughout the college benefit from being taught by teachers who have both a very good knowledge and personal enjoyment of geography. Key features of successful learning are that students know what is expected of them because the learning objectives for each session and the overall unit assessment criteria are shared with them. Homework is used well to reinforce and enhance learning and to develop students' independent research skills. In Years 7 to 9 lessons are planned well and structured to provide a range of activities that fully involve students of all levels of attainment. Students with special education needs progress at a rate that matches that of other students. In Years 10 and 11, teachers fully understand the requirements of the courses that they teach and lessons are planned very well with tasks that are varied, interesting and challenging and actively involve the students. Relationships between teachers and students are very good. Teachers have high expectations of all students, who in turn have very good attitudes to geography. A strong

feature of all lessons is the way students engage with the tasks, work co-operatively and sustain concentration. Marking is thorough but although teachers often include helpful evaluative comments, students are not always provided with information on how to improve their work. The mark scheme is not used consistently and rarely is it compatible with the assessment criteria shared with students.

Leadership and management

83. The head of humanities manages the department well and together with the head of geography provides very good leadership. Department development planning is good and is evidenced by the recent introduction of computers and software to allow the regular use of ICT within the department's teaching programme and for tracking student progress. The curriculum is well planned; practical enquiry and fieldwork, within and outside curriculum time, enrich students' learning. Of special note are links with primary schools where students in Year 9 "teach" younger students, and the residential trip to France. The department offers a vocational GCSE in leisure and tourism. Teaching and learning in this area are good and students are on track to achieve above average results. Very good progress has been made since the previous inspection and standards are continuing to improve.

History

Provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of leadership is good, with a clear vision for the subject's development.
- Students achieve well as a result of good teaching from a strong team.
- Students' progress is not assessed and monitored systematically enough.

Commentary

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Average	Above average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Examination results

84. Results in the GCSE examination in 2002 were in line with national averages, and represent a dip in a trend of above average results in recent years, for the small option classes. Teacher assessments for 2002 indicate students were below national averages at the end of Year 9.

Standards and achievement

85. In the light of their attainment on entry to the college, students achieve well overall. Standards of work seen during the inspection were in line with national expectations for students in Year 9. All students acquired an understanding of major changes brought about by industrialisation, and showed an ability to work with historical sources.

86. Year 11 students following the GCSE course were working above national expectations. All students showed a clear understanding of topics studied, with most using sources to good effect in their written work. Students were able to explain the intentions of cartoons from the Depression era in the USA, and choose between sources as examples of historical evidence.

Teaching and learning

87. In Years 7 to 9, the relationships between experienced teachers and the students are very good. Lessons are well planned for students of all levels of attainment. Students with special educational needs achieve as well as other students. Homework is used well to reinforce learning.

88. In Years 10 and 11, teachers' very good relations with students are again central to continued progress. Students are very positive in their attitude to history. The pace of learning is usually brisk and teachers are careful to stress learning objectives in all lessons.

89. In all lessons seen, the team of committed humanities teachers stimulated and encouraged students' interest with a range of activities that promoted good outcomes.

90. Teachers' marking encourages students well, although in some work, teachers paid too little attention to informing students about how they could raise their level of attainment. During one lesson observed in one of the specialist humanities rooms, the excessively hot and unventilated atmosphere had a negative impact on students' learning.

Leadership and management

91. The department is well managed within the humanities area by a recently appointed head of department. A major strength is the enthusiasm and expertise of the team of humanities teachers, who have maintained the standards noted in the previous inspection. They plan lessons carefully within the humanities planning framework, and establish positive learning environments. The head of history has identified appropriate areas for immediate development. Greater and more effective use of assessment to promote students' understanding of how to improve and more use of ICT are two such areas.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of leadership is good, with clear priorities for development.
- Students achieve well in Years 7 to 9 as a result of good teaching.
- Assessment practice should be brought into line with the recommendations of the Derbyshire Agreed Syllabus for religious education.
- Students do not have enough access to ICT to support their learning.

Commentary

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Average	Average
Achievement	Good	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since previous	Satisfactory

inspection	
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Examination results

92. Results in the GCSE short course examinations were above average and continue a rising trend, although only a small proportion of students are entered for the examination.

Standards and achievement

93. In the light of their prior attainment, students achieve well overall in Years 7 to 9. By the end of Year 9 all students acquire an understanding of the major religions. They are able to reflect upon and understand the importance of religions' central beliefs and rituals.

94. In Year 11, all students were able to explain how Christian and other faith beliefs contribute to society's attitudes to conflict and war.

Teaching and learning

95. In Years 7 to 9, students benefit from very good relationships with experienced teachers. Lessons are well planned for students of all abilities and students with special educational needs achieve as well as their peers. Homework is used effectively.

96. In Years 10 and 11, the very good relationships are crucial in maintaining at least satisfactory progress. Students' attitudes to the subject are very good. Teachers are careful to stress learning objectives in all lessons, which usually proceed at a good pace.

97. Teachers' marking encourages students well, but in the work seen through the inspection not enough comment was made about how precisely students could raise their level of attainment.

Leadership and management

98. The department is managed well, with a strong team of teachers who are drawn from the humanities area. Clear direction is provided, for example in the response seen at the time of the inspection to the revised recommendations of the Derbyshire Agreed Syllabus. Satisfactory progress has been made since the previous inspection. For example, there is now clear attention to planning for the needs of all students in the class. At the time of the inspection, teachers were beginning to revise their assessment practice to come into line with county recommendations, to improve teachers' and students' understanding of how well students are doing and how they might improve.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

Provision in design and technology is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers are knowledgeable and have high expectations.
- Students achieve well in Years 10 and 11 because of the good teaching.
- The curriculum in Key Stage 4 is broad and well matched to the needs of students.
- Students' designing skills are weaker than their making skills because they are not specifically taught in Key Stage 3.

Commentary

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Below average	Above average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Satisfactory

Examination results

99. Results in the GCSE examinations are above the national average and, in electronics products and resistant materials courses, well above the national averages. However, direct comparison with national figures is difficult as only two thirds of the cohort were entered for those examinations.

Standards and achievement

100. In Key Stage 3 students demonstrate a good range of practical skills in a variety of materials. They are not taught specific designing strategies or given the opportunity to tackle more complex design problems. This means that their designing skills are less well developed than their making skills. Standards on entry to the college are just below national expectations and remain so at the end of Year 9. However, they are not as far below as teacher assessments would indicate.

101. In Key Stage 4 the achievement of all students is good, with courses being well matched to students' interest and abilities. GCSE design folders are well presented, with some excellent examples in food and textiles. Students are beginning to make effective use of CAD/CAM and the use of electronics in engineering project work is enhancing the students' ability to design and make innovative products. Students on the non-examination technical course are all highly motivated and are learning a range of appropriate knowledge and skills.

Teaching and learning

102. Students benefit from knowledgeable and very committed teachers. In Key Stage 3 teachers use a good range of strategies, including instruction, demonstration and ICT, to maintain interest and pace. Less able students are taught in smaller groups and this, along with effectively used support assistants and teaching materials, ensures they make progress in line with all students. The targets students are set at the end of each unit of work are too general and do not indicate how performance in the subject can be improved.

103. In Key Stage 4 students are interested and involved in their work because of the varied curriculum on offer. The working atmosphere in classes is always good. Teachers provide good feedback to students about their work and ways to improve it. Where teaching was only satisfactory it was either because the teacher was attempting to do too much in the lesson or the activities were not sufficiently well matched to the lesson objectives.

Leadership and management

104. Leadership is relatively new, with a sound vision of where the subject is going. Management is good, maintaining a departmental team that plans and works well together and, as a result, promotes a consistent view of the subject to students. Although the department has worked hard to improve the quality of accommodation it remains unsatisfactory overall with some rooms that do not provide an environment that is conducive to high quality designing and making.

105. Since the previous inspection progress has been satisfactory. Standards in Key Stage 4 remain above the national average and teaching and learning is good.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design

Provision in art and design is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The good relationships between staff and students benefit and motivate students.
- The expertise of teachers enables students to develop a range of artistic experiences.
- The abilities of all students, including those with special educational needs are developed well.
- Students develop good social attitudes through the co-operative and independent learning in art.
- The good assessment procedures are not communicated effectively enough to enable students to understand how they can improve further.
- The opportunities for exploration and creativity in Years 7 to 9 are limited.

Commentary

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Below average	Average
Achievement seen	Good	Good
Teaching and Learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Examination results

106. Although there had been a steadily improving trend since the previous inspection, GCSE examination results dipped to below average in 2002 but have risen in 2003. A strength of the department is the open access policy and the attainment by a large number of students on the vocational GCSE course who have consistently performed well. However, results remain below average in Year 9 where art was entirely taught by non-specialists. The department has been in a state of transition, and after a lengthy period of staff instability, the recent new leadership has raised standards. A specialist for Key Stage 3 has now been appointed.

Standards and achievement

107. Currently, students' achievement, relative to their prior attainment, is good. Many students in Year 7 show a good awareness of line, tone and colour in their observational drawing and painting. Students in Year 9 make good progress and develop and execute imaginative ideas of 'The Body as Machine' forming faces and hands from papier machè then integrating mechanical and electrical features. Students on GCSE and vocational courses show real development in the use of colour, form and texture whether in their clay models or large scale sculptures. They show sensitivity in their fine art drawings, using coloured inks and washes to good effect. Good use is made of ICT for historical research and for developing their own ideas.

Teaching and learning

108. Students in Years 7 to 9 learn to establish good routines in a well ordered environment. Lessons are challenging, demanding a range of activities in a limited time as seen in a Year 7 class of observational drawing and painting of a Still Life. Teachers have high expectations and manage classes well but a few boys in Year 9 exhibit some negative behaviour. Most students work well together or individually, developing ideas discovered from artists such as Giger or Escher, concentrating on their work for long periods of time. Well-planned lessons allow all students to make maximum use of the time and their good attitudes towards each other ensure smooth co-operation in getting out and using equipment. Students are proud of their work and enjoy art. Homework is set and done regularly and lessons make a good contribution to the social, moral, spiritual and cultural ethos of the college.

109. In Years 10 and 11 students work increasingly independently and enjoy the lessons. A noticeable feature of lessons is the informal way students enter the room and get out their work and start as college students would. The good relationships between staff and students are a strength of the department and are evident from the numbers of students who return for additional classes during lunch or after school. The expertise of the teachers allows students to explore a wide range of artistic experiences. The options choice in Year 10 prevents many students from accessing the GCSE course but those who do show maturity, flair and imagination. The vocational GCSE course is very popular, particularly among the boys who work with commitment to achieve high standards of presentation in their chosen media which are subject to the limitations of accommodation. Air dried clay is used as there is no kiln or wheel, and larger scale observation drawing is hampered by the lack of easels. Marking and the on-going assessment of work are good. The newly developed assessment procedures in art simplify the tracking of each student's progress throughout the college but could be further developed to allow each student to understand what is needed to improve further.

110. Students with special educational needs progress very well throughout the college because teachers show sensitivity to their individual needs and adapt materials and teaching aids and examination courses appropriately. Teachers and support staff work very well together.

Leadership and management

111. Management is good and leadership shows clear vision and direction. These are manifest in the imaginative and detailed schemes of work, policies and assessment procedures as well as in the mentoring of the recently appointed art teacher for Years 7 to 9. Although the accommodation is unsatisfactory, imaginative approaches have been used to avoid disadvantaging students. Visits to the sculpture park and museums are made and links with both primary schools and the horticultural college enable students to exhibit work in the local community. A visiting potter worked with students to make plaques and statues subsequently exhibited at the Chelsea Flower Show. There has been good improvement since the last inspection.

Music

Provision for music is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The number of students taking the subject as a GCSE examination course has increased since the last inspection.
- Inclusion is a feature of classroom music work.
- Leadership is good.
- Accommodation for music is poor.

Commentary

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Average	Average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Good
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Satisfactory

Leadership	Good
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Examination results

112. Students reach standards that are average in Year 9, and their achievement is satisfactory. The number of students opting for the GCSE course has increased since the last inspection. GCSE results in 2002 were excellent but no more than satisfactory in 2003. In Key Stage 4 students' achievement is good overall, although this is not always reflected in the examination results.

Standards and achievement

113. Teachers are experienced and they work with energy and enthusiasm to promote good learning. The result is that students make at least satisfactory progress. Students' paired working is commonplace in lessons. This enables them to help and support one another which they do readily, and to good effect. Composition and the development of students' aural skills feature in both planning and teaching.

Teaching and learning

114. Teachers' expectations are appropriate, and tasks are well matched to the learning styles of the majority of students, who work steadily and show perseverance. In a Year 8 lesson, for example, students played a commonly known melody on keyboards, prior to attempting to compose a variation on this theme. The composing activity helps them to understand how composers work and how music is structured. Opportunities to include students of all abilities are good features of such classroom music work. Positive and supportive assessment identifies key learning points for improvement, particularly when students are involved in the self-evaluation process.

Leadership and management

115. Good leadership and satisfactory management ensure the efficient organisation of the department and the work of the five visiting instrumental teachers. Students enjoy their class lessons and benefit from the orderly and well-structured approach to learning that the department provides for them.

116. Accommodation is poor and resources are satisfactory. The limited classroom space makes collaborative group work, other than paired working, almost impossible. There is insufficient space for more than one class to be taught at any one time. Teaching accommodation for visiting teachers is poor.

117. Overall, the improvement since the last inspection has been good. Some forty students now learn a wide range of instruments within and beyond the college. The college builds on this by providing a good range of extra-curricular activities some of which attract a large number of participants. Rehearsals for musical activities are enjoyable. Staff colleagues also join in these purposeful music-making sessions which produce good standards.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above average in Year 11.
- The quality of teaching and learning has improved.
- Students' attitudes and behaviour are very good.
- Inadequate accommodation restricts what can be played.
- Expectations are not always high enough, particularly for younger students.
- Students are given too few opportunities to develop their understanding of fitness and health.

Commentary

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Average	Above average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Good
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Examination results

118. Test results and standards in Years 7 to 9 are broadly in line with national expectations. Inspection evidence and work seen points to satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection with the majority of students performing relatively well in comparison to entry levels. However, a significant number of higher attaining students are underperforming and working below their capabilities within some teaching groups. There is a significant difference between the performance of boys and girls in a number of sporting activities due to inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and learning.

119. In Years 10 and 11 standards are above average. GCSE results convey an upward trend since the previous inspection with regard to A*-C grades and A-E grades. However there is a notable fluctuation in the number of students achieving the higher A*-A grades and A-B grades in the short course examination. A new long course GCSE examination has been recently introduced which suits the needs and abilities of the majority of students which is reflected in the current standard of work seen.

Standards and achievement

120. In Years 7 to 9 students are making satisfactory progress in most areas of the curriculum. Entry level skills are below that found nationally but students make satisfactory gains developing skills as a result of good demonstration and knowledgeable instruction particularly in hockey, football, dance and gymnastics. They learn through increasingly thoughtful evaluation and constructive feedback.

121. Students' fitness levels and hand-eye co-ordination are less well developed in Years 7 and 8 as is their ability to select and apply their tactical skills and compositional ideas progressively to more demanding situations. Above all else they do not have the depth of knowledge and understanding to enable them to succeed in match play or to tackle high order skills in a variety of sports for example in boys' basketball. By the end of Year 9 students are making relatively good progress and reaching satisfactory to good standards in most areas of the curriculum. However,

their technical abilities are below average in some teaching groups and the higher attaining students remain insufficiently challenged when activities are not pitched at the appropriate level.

122. By the end of Year 11 students' skills are above average in most areas of the curriculum. They learn effectively when working in pairs or other small groups because teachers undertake regular and accurate assessment of their capabilities. They progress well when teachers adopt, modify and provide stimulating and alternative activities which consolidate knowledge and skills. Students have settled into the new examination course well. They are making good progress due to the consistent application of examination standards and requirements.

Teaching and learning

123. Overall the quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers generally have good subject knowledge. This enables them to explain concepts clearly and simply and as a result the majority of students learn quickly. Within some teaching groups however, expectations are not high enough, particularly for the higher attaining students who are given insufficient opportunities to extend their technical skills and creative abilities.

124. Students' knowledge of fitness and health is a relative strength in GCSE theory. The importance of preparation for and recovery after exercise and the benefits of physical activity are stressed within this context but are not carried over into practical lessons at Key Stages 3 or 4. Teachers are generally good role models who support, encourage and challenge student performance. Successful teaching is characterised by the appropriate use of warm-ups which are both aerobic and skills based, followed by careful explanation of learning outcomes of both skills and performance. Less successful lessons are characterised by long periods of inactivity and too much teacher intervention which hinders continuity and progression. In a number of lessons students re-visited skills at the expense of acquiring new ones and there is little attention given to reward or student appraisal.

125. Students are very well turned out, behave co-operatively and are very positive about physical education lessons. Students' participation in extra-curricular activities, although encouraging, is limited as is their enthusiasm for involvement in lifelong physical activity due to the narrow opportunities for enrichment partly due to inadequate accommodation.

Leadership and management

126. The head of department has responded well to the criticisms of the previous inspection. There is now stronger emphasis on the use of assessment and some improvement in the quality of teaching and learning. It now remains for the department to build on its existing good practice and further improve the quality and variety of teaching and learning opportunities across both key stages but more particularly Key Stage 3 to match the needs and abilities of all students.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

The college offers its Years 10 and 11 students opportunities to follow vocational courses in art and design, business, engineering, health and social care, information technology, leisure and tourism and performing arts. These subjects as well as the NVQ course with work placement were sampled.

Provision in the vocational courses and life skills subjects is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students' achievement is good leading to good examination results.
- The school's policy of work placements relating to vocational courses is successful.
- Teaching is good.

Commentary

Examination results

127. GNVQ examination results in 2002 were 60 per cent pass rate or above in every subject. All students following the GNVQ health and social care obtained at least a pass with the majority attaining merits and the figure for leisure and tourism was over 75 per cent in 2003.

Standards and achievement

128. Current standards are good in all vocational subjects. Students' coursework is above average. Students are able to produce good coursework including assignments relating to work related courses where students obtain placements as part of their course. Students' achievement is very good with many starting from a below average prior attainment.

Teaching and learning

129. The quality of teaching and learning is never less than good. Students enjoy their learning and many respond well to being given opportunities for some independent learning. Students on work placement show considerable responsibility in maintaining a good balance between their work at school and during their two day placement a week. They are interested and focus well on acquiring the skills necessary for further careers or training.

Leadership and management

130. Vocational courses are well led and managed by a team of dedicated and enthusiastic staff. A great deal is done to encourage students to take part in a two week work placement one week of which has to relate to their vocational course. Most students are also encouraged and supported in a successful programme of a regular community placement to help them to gain relevant experience.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **good**.

Main strengths

- There have been substantial improvements since the last inspection, as the subject now has a higher status and is taught throughout the college.
- Students achieve well in lessons.
- Teaching and learning are good, with some very good teaching observed during the inspection.
- The scheme of work for Years 7 to 9 is of high quality, enabling the curriculum to be taught effectively.
- The introduction of a short course GCSE in citizenship is innovative for Year 10 students.

Commentary

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Above expectation	Above expectation
Achievement seen	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Standards and achievement

131. Achievement is good throughout the college, indicating that standards will be above average. Observations in both lessons and tutor group periods show that students are actively engaged in the lessons and achieving well. Students in Year 9 can hold discussions and give presentations in small groups to their class on various current affairs topics. Others in the class give their points of view confidently, for example, on what to do in the Californian bush fires. Some would flee, others fight, while some would take precious possessions. Older students in Year 10 participate in community work experience and can discuss and write up aspects of this for their records.

Teaching and learning

132. Students benefit from well-prepared and organised lessons and tutor times. Teachers manage students well and good relationships help to engage and focus students on the task. In turn students enjoy learning and participate enthusiastically. High levels of respect and courtesy are evident in all lessons. Behaviour is very good and attitudes are positive. A good range of questions helps students to think broadly about the subject. Teachers plan a range of work to suit differing abilities and monitor progress in lessons effectively, offering support and motivating students well. Good links are made to a variety of different curriculum areas, in particular to drama for Year 7 students, enabling students to learn in different ways.

Leadership and management

133. Enthusiastic and knowledgeable leadership has enabled this subject to become firmly established despite being relatively newly introduced. This is supported by effective management, with subject leaders having a clear view of the gaps in provision, and how to tackle them. Innovative features such as the introduction of the short course GCSE mean that the subject has a high profile in the college, providing students with a valuable certificate at the end of their course. Opportunities to use existing features of college life in part of the citizenship curriculum have been seized enthusiastically, such as the recent fund-raising 'Jeans for Genes' and the well-established college partnership with a major charity, which offered students a chance to take part in community activities.

134. The curriculum is well organised. The new scheme is a valuable resource, offering very good support for staff in preparing lessons while giving flexibility for staff who want to use their own ideas. Assessment is being developed appropriately now the curriculum is in place. Ideas for assessing students' achievements include record books and self-evaluation.

135. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. The citizenship curriculum, originally in the shadow of the personal, social and health education curriculum, has now fully emerged into a subject place in its own right. This has been achieved through substantial hard work and commitment from the department and has resulted in an imaginative and interesting curriculum for all students.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the college	3
How inclusive the college is	2
How the college's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	3
Value for money provided by the college	3
Overall standards achieved	4
Students' achievement	3
Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	3
Attendance	4
Attitudes	3
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	3
Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The quality of education provided by the college	3
The quality of teaching	3
How well students learn	3
The quality of assessment	4
How well the curriculum meets students needs	3
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-college activities	3
Accommodation and resources	5
Students' care, welfare, health and safety	3
Support, advice and guidance for students	3
How well the college seeks and acts on students' views	3
The effectiveness of the college's links with parents	2
The quality of the college's links with the community	3
The college's links with other schools and colleges	2
The leadership and management of the college	3
The governance of the college	3
The leadership of the principal	2
The leadership of other key staff	3
The effectiveness of management	4

Inspectors make judgements on a scale: excellent (grade 1); very good (2); good (3); satisfactory (4); unsatisfactory (5); poor (6); very poor (7).

