

INSPECTION REPORT

JOHN O'GAUNT COMMUNITY TECHNOLOGY COLLEGE

Hungerford

LEA area: West Berkshire

Unique reference number: 110050

Principal: Mrs L Bartlett

Lead inspector: Paul Cosway

Dates of inspection: 22 – 25 March 2004

Inspection number: 259399

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE COLLEGE

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of students:	11 – 18 years
Gender of students:	Mixed
Number on roll:	586
College address:	Priory Road Hungerford Berkshire
Postcode:	RG17 0AN
Telephone number:	01488 682400
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Appropriate authority:	Local Education Authority
Name of chair of governors:	Mr John Adey
Date of previous inspection:	23 rd March 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE COLLEGE

The college is a smaller than average, mixed comprehensive school in the small town of Hungerford. It is a specialist technology college with a small Sixth Form. It is in an area where the high cost of housing makes it difficult to recruit and retain teachers and this has made it difficult for the college to raise attainment in some subjects, such as mathematics.

The area that the college serves is socially and economically mixed, with some relatively affluent households and some that are relatively deprived. Almost all the students are white. There is a smaller proportion than nationally of students for whom English is an additional language.

The attainment of students on entry to the college is below the national average. The proportion of students who are entitled to free school meals is broadly average. The proportion of students who have been identified as having SEN is close to the national average, but the proportion that is on School Action Plus (who have statements of need and the help of outside agencies) is above average.

The college was last inspected in March 1998.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
2734	Paul Cosway	<i>Lead inspector</i>	English as an additional language, Drama
13762	Norman Shelley	<i>Lay inspector</i>	
15372	Patricia Walker	<i>Team inspector</i>	English (and English in the Sixth Form)
15485	Roger Butler	<i>Team inspector</i>	Religious education
18846	Philip Priest	<i>Team inspector</i>	Music
18261	Tony Hill	<i>Team inspector</i>	Art (and Art in the Sixth Form), Special educational needs
1995	Kate Seager	<i>Team inspector</i>	French, German, Leisure and tourism (in the Sixth Form)
27585	Ken Hounslow	<i>Team inspector</i>	Science, Chemistry (in the Sixth Form)
31983	Debra Makin	<i>Team inspector</i>	Physical education, Citizenship,
19135	Derek Ebbage	<i>Team inspector</i>	Mathematics
3753	Hamish Wilkie	<i>Team inspector</i>	Mathematics in the Sixth Form
13122	Stephanie Matthews	<i>Team inspector</i>	History (and History in the Sixth Form)
4486	Michael Weller	<i>Team inspector</i>	History
18188	Christine Thompson	<i>Team inspector</i>	Design and technology
1578	Maureen Sinclair	<i>Team inspector</i>	Information and communication technology, Business education (in the Sixth Form).
31218	Tom Allen	<i>Team inspector</i>	Geography

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is an effective school providing a good standard of education for its students. Almost all students achieve well because they have positive attitudes and behave well in lessons. They learn well, because the good ethos for learning ensures that they concentrate in class and benefit from the good teaching. Attainment on entry is below average, but by the time they reach the end of Year 11 students' levels of attainment are close to the average nationally. The headteacher gives good leadership, supported by an effective senior team. Difficulties in recruiting staff have been a barrier to raising achievement even further, but the capacity for improvement is now good. The college is well managed and gives satisfactory value for money.

The college's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Students make good progress in most subject areas, because of the good provision.
- Attitudes and behaviour are good and attendance is well above average, because of the positive climate for learning.
- Teaching is good overall – very good in the Sixth Form – and, along with very good assessment systems, is helping students to learn well.
- Attainment could be higher in some subjects where a weakness in writing skills holds a significant minority back.
- Good management ensures that the college runs smoothly and moves forward. The leadership and management of subjects are mainly good, but range from very good to unsatisfactory.
- Students' personal development is good, the result of good advice, support and guidance.
- The provision for gifted and talented students and those with special educational needs (SEN) is very good.
- Very good links with parents and good links with the community support students' learning.
- The Sixth Form curriculum needs to be broadened further to include more vocational subjects and to meet the statutory requirement to include religious education.

There has been good improvement since the last inspection, especially in aspects of the curriculum and in the provision for technology.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Performance compared with:		all schools			similar schools
		2001	2002	2003	2003
Year 11	GCSE/GNVQ examinations	D	D	D	B
Year 13	A/AS level and VCE examinations	E*	D	C	

Key: A – well above average; B – above average; C – average; D – below average; E – well below average; E – very low.*

For Year 11, similar schools are those whose students attained similarly at the end of Year 9.

Students achieve well overall. Currently, attainment is close to the average nationally at the end of Years 9 and 11 and in the Sixth Form. In 2003, results in the national tests for Year 9 students were in line with the national average in mathematics and science, and above average in English. They had made good progress from their levels of attainment on entry. Results have risen over recent years in line with the rise nationally.

At the end of Year 11, GCSE results were below the average nationally, but above those in similar schools. This represents good progress. The best results were in art, German, English literature and geography. There was comparatively weaker performance in French, design and technology

and history. Results have improved over the last two years, but the trend in improvements over recent years has been below that nationally. Currently, attainment is close to average overall. It is average in English and mathematics, but below average in science.

In the Sixth Form, results in A/AS Level and vocational examinations have improved significantly in recent years. They were in the bottom five per cent of all schools in 2001, below average in 2002 and average in 2003. The students make very good progress. The best performing subjects in 2003 were history, psychology, art and design and business studies; the lowest was German.

Students' personal development is good. They are well behaved, sociable and responsible and respect and appreciate the opportunities that their college gives them. **Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall.** Moral and social development is very good, spiritual satisfactory. Students' attitudes to college and their work are good, as is their behaviour, and they form very good relationships. Their attendance is very good and they are very punctual.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the college is good. Good teaching, very good in the Sixth Form, ensures that students learn well in the majority of lessons. The teachers' good, often very good, subject knowledge and their good relationships with students ensure that they concentrate, work hard and learn quickly. Where lessons are less effective, it is because the teaching does not provide enough challenge and the pace is too slow.

The college is developing a curriculum that is innovative and appropriate, enriched by a good range of extra-curricular activities. The accommodation and levels of staffing are satisfactory, and improving. The very good partnership with parents and good links with the community contribute to the effectiveness of the education. Marking and assessment give good guidance to students.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of the college are good with good leadership and management from the headteacher and her senior team. Senior managers have complementary strengths. They support staff and are setting them challenging, but achievable, targets. The college's capacity for future improvement is good, because its work is assessed and monitored well and appropriate action taken. The governing body makes a satisfactory contribution to the work of the college, although it has not been able to comply with the statutory requirement to hold a daily act of collective worship for all. Most heads of subject areas give good or very good leadership, but there is variability in subjects that have less experienced leaders.

PARENTS' AND STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE COLLEGE

Parents are very pleased with the college and believe that it is helping their children to make good progress. Around ten per cent of parents were concerned about how well informed they are about their child's progress and about the setting of homework. The inspection found that information to parents is good, but the college needs to ensure that homework is set consistently. Some parents are concerned about staffing difficulties. The use of non-specialist teachers is affecting standards in a few classes, but the college is working hard to resolve this. Almost all students like the college and value all that it does for them.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Continue to work to raise attainment at the end of Year 11, with a particular concentration on improving standards of writing across the curriculum.
- Continue to improve the effectiveness of leadership in all the subject areas.
- Broaden further the Sixth Form curriculum and meet the statutory requirement to teach religious education in the Sixth Form.

THE SIXTH FORM

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a good Sixth Form. Standards are average and the qualities of teaching and learning are very good. Achievement is good overall. The curriculum is relatively narrow, although it has broadened this year and two further subjects are planned for 2004/05. There are very good enrichment opportunities. Planned federation links will broaden the curriculum base in future years. The Sixth Form does not give satisfactory value for money because it is small, but it is worthwhile, because of the benefits it brings to the students, the ethos of the college and to the local area. The students are very positive about the education they receive and the guidance they are given.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- The qualities of teaching and learning are very good and students gain advanced level examination grades in line with national averages, with five subjects falling within the top quartile of national results in the A2 examinations in 2003.
- Achievement is good: the college adds significant educational value over the course of students' time in the Sixth Form.
- The positive attitudes of students, and their very good and often excellent behaviour, help to create a very positive environment for learning.
- The curriculum is relatively narrow, but is broadening through planned federation links. There are very good curriculum enrichment opportunities that extend learning opportunities and develop personal and social skills.
- The Sixth Form does not give satisfactory value for money because many courses have small numbers of students.
- The Sixth Form provision enables many students to benefit from further education, who would otherwise find it difficult to access it in this rural area.

QUALITY AND STANDARDS IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES OF THE CURRICULUM

Judgements about the provision in the subjects and courses inspected in the Sixth Form are shown below. They are based mainly on the quality of teaching and learning and how well students achieve. Not all subjects in the Sixth Form were inspected.

Curriculum area	Evaluation
English, languages and communication	Provision for English is very good . Standards are rising and achievement is good. Teaching is good, with a particular strength in the excellent use made of assessment to inform students of their own progress.
Mathematics	Provision is good . Teaching and learning are particularly strong, because of the enthusiasm, great experience and very good subject knowledge of the staff.

Science	The provision for chemistry is good . Standards are above national averages in Year 13. The very good teaching leads to very good learning and high achievement.
Humanities	The provision for history is very good . Standards in Year 13 are in line with national averages. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and teaching is very good, enabling students to achieve well. They are encouraged to take a leading role in lessons and work as independent learners.
Visual and performing arts and media	The provision for art is very good . Standards are high and examination results above national averages and the best in the college. Teaching and learning are consistently very good and the teachers' knowledge and enthusiasm engages students effectively.
Business	The provision for business education is satisfactory . Good teaching leads to good learning, with students making good progress compared to their prior attainment. Students enjoy the discussions and the relevance of the subject to the world of work.
Leisure and tourism	The provision for students on the GNVQ Leisure and Tourism course is good . Standards are broadly average and achievement is good . Teaching and learning are good, being enriched through good links to the local leisure industry.

The curriculum areas are broadly common across all post-16 education and training. They do not necessarily correspond with subjects and courses taught by the college. Inspectors make judgements in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. Excellent and very good are equivalent to the judgement 'outstanding' in further education and Sixth Form college reports; poor and very poor are equivalent to 'very weak'.

ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

Induction to the Sixth Form is good. Students are given good personal support and guidance. They receive very good guidance on university applications and courses and good guidance for future employment. In those subjects in which they attain and achieve most highly, such as art, English and history, they are given very good feedback on their work. They can use this assessment information to learn how to improve and so make very good progress.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

The Sixth Form benefits from good leadership and effective management. The college's senior team works hard to improve the curriculum and thereby attract more students to the good provision that is made. Federation links are being developed with two other local schools and it is expected that these will broaden the curriculum offered for students in all three schools. The head of Sixth Form and the Sixth Form teaching team work well together to provide an effective learning experience that is valued by students and parents.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

The inspectors spoke to almost all the Sixth Form students. They are all happy in the college and value what it does for them. Almost all the students enjoy their time in the Sixth Form and would recommend it to their friends. They find the Sixth Form teachers and tutors very helpful and supportive.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS

Standards achieved in subjects and courses

Students achieve well overall in the main college and the Sixth Form.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Attainment in the national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2003 was above the national average in English and average in mathematics and science.
- Attainment in many subjects was close to the national average in GCSE examinations in 2003.
- Students make good progress.
- Attainment could be raised still higher in some subjects.

Commentary

1. The attainment of students on entry to the college is below average overall. The current Year 7 students attained below average scores in science and well below average scores in English and mathematics in the national tests for 11 year-olds. Students make good progress during their time at the college and their achievement is generally good. By the time they take their GCSE examinations, their attainment is close to average overall. They achieve well because the college develops in them positive attitudes towards learning. As a result, almost all students respect their teachers, behave well and work hard in lessons – and so make good progress. An important factor in motivating students is the effort that the college makes to provide appropriate courses, especially in Years 10 and 11, to meet students' needs and aspirations. In addition, the very good use of assessment information ensures that students know what national curriculum level they are at in every subject that they take, their target grade and how to achieve it. They value this information and use it well. The main hindrance to learning, in those classes that are not achieving well, is teaching that does not motivate or interest the students. Over time, achievement has been affected by the loss of teachers – largely because of the cost of housing locally – and the difficulties that the college has had in recruiting replacements of quality. Some classes have been taught by a series of temporary teachers. This situation still continues, although to a much less significant extent than in the past.

Attainment at the end of Year 9

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 9 – average point scores in 2003

Standards in:	College results	National results
English	34.2 (35.3)	33.4 (33.3)
mathematics	35.2 (33.9)	35.4 (34.7)
science	33.3 (33.4)	33.6 (33.3)

There were 117 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

2. Attainment in the national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2003 was close to the national average in mathematics and science, and above average in English, but in all three subjects below the average of students from similar schools. The English department is very successful in raising students' levels of attainment and they make rapid progress. The department teaches the skills necessary for students to succeed in the national curriculum tests very well. However, these skills are not transferred by the students to their work in other subjects. Across the curriculum, the problems with literacy – especially with writing – are affecting standards.

3. Overall, both boys and girls have attained results below average in the national tests in recent years. Boys have attained slightly less well than girls, as has been the case nationally.

4. The finding of the inspection is that attainment at the end of Year 9 is close to the national average overall, but that it varies from subject to subject. Students are currently achieving well in English and making good progress. In science and mathematics, their achievement has improved since last year. It is good in mathematics and satisfactory in science. Elsewhere, there is good achievement in most subjects, in which students' standards have risen from below average on entry to the college to average by the end of Year 9. The findings are summarised in the table below. 'Achievement' refers to the progress that students have made since entry to the college.

SUBJECT	STANDARDS in Year 9	ACHIEVEMENT
English	Above average	Very good
Mathematics	Average	Good
Science	Average	Satisfactory
Art	Average	Very good
Citizenship	Average	Satisfactory
Design and technology	Average	Satisfactory
Geography	Average	Good
History	Average	Good
Information and communication technology	Average	Good
Modern foreign languages	(French) Average (German) Above average	Good Very good
Music	Above average	Very good
Physical education	Average	Good
Religious education	Below average	Satisfactory

Attainment at the end of Year 11

Standards in GCSE/GNVQ examinations at the end of Year 11 in 2003

	College results	National results
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	45 (36)	52 (50)
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	84 (94)	91 (91)
Percentage of students gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	93 (97)	96 (96)
Average point score per student (best eight subjects)	31.5 (34.7)	34.3 (34.7)

There were 103 students in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

5. Overall, students' performance in GCSE examinations in 2003 was below the national average, but above that in similar schools. The proportions of students who gained five or more A* to C or A* to G passes in their GCSE examinations were below the national average. However, more students gained five or more A* to C passes than in similar schools and the proportion who passed five or more GCSE examinations with an A* to G grade was in line with the average for similar schools. The proportion of students who passed one or more GCSE at any grade was well below the national average and below the similar schools' average. This was because of the number of students who were on the college's roll at the end of Year 11 in 2003, but were being educated elsewhere and students who were incorrectly included in the statistics because they were of the wrong age.

6. Results in GCSE examinations in 2003 were above average in art and German: the result of very good provision in these subjects. It was close to average in English, English literature and geography. It was significantly below average in design and technology, combined science, French and mathematics. Provision is improving in these subjects and attainment is currently close to average in science and mathematics.

7. Both boys and girls have attained results below the national average over recent years. Although girls' results have been higher than boys' have, boys have attained better than girls compared with their peers across the country as a whole. The inspection did not find any significant difference in attainment between boys and girls.
8. The college exceeded its examination target for 2003 and is on course to do so again in 2004.
9. Students are now achieving well and their attainment is close to the national average. The inspection findings are summarised in the table below. 'Achievement' refers to the progress that students are making over the two-year courses.

SUBJECT	STANDARDS in Year 11	ACHIEVEMENT
English	Above average	Good
Mathematics	Average	Good
Science	Close to average	Satisfactory
Art	Above average	Very good
Citizenship	Below average	Satisfactory
Design and technology	Below average	Satisfactory in Year 10, but a backlog of underachievement in Year 11
Geography	Average	Good
History	Below average but improving	Good
Information and communication technology	Average	Good
Modern foreign languages	(French) Average (German) Above average	Good Very good
Music	Above average	Very good
Physical education	Average	Good
Religious education	Below average	Satisfactory

10. Attainment and achievement are lower in Year 11 than in Year 10 in design and technology because, though provision and teaching have improved this year, many classes were taught last year by non-specialists and there is a backlog of underachievement. These difficulties are largely – though not entirely – resolved, but have affected the progress that the older students have made over time. There were also staffing difficulties last year in religious education, French, science and mathematics. Another factor that is affecting attainment is the students' ability to express themselves in writing. Teachers of subjects other than English are not all teaching their students the skills they need to write well, using subject specific vocabulary, in examination conditions. Overall, attainment in literacy is below average and in numeracy is average by the end of Year 11. Oracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills are satisfactory.

11. Students with SEN achieve at least as well as others in the mainstream classes, because teachers know them well and respond sensitively to their needs. Where there is support from teaching assistants, achievement may be higher. Students achieve very well when withdrawn to the study support department, because of the very good teaching and support they receive and the positive attitudes and good behaviour they bring to lessons. There is a small number of students for whom English is an additional language, but none is at an early stage of learning English and all are achieving well.

The college's results and achievements for students in the Sixth Form

Standards in GCE A/AS level and VCE examinations at the end of Year 13 in 2003

The percentages in the table below include AS results from 2002 and for students who left at the end of Year 12 in 2002. The average point score reflects the performance of students more accurately than the percentage data.

	College results	National results
Percentage of entries gaining A-E grades	70.9 (79.3)	89.4 (92.6)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	15.2 (15.8)	32.6 (35.3)
Average point score per student	256.1 (200.5)	258.2 (263.3)

There were 19 students in the year group. The figures in brackets are for the previous year.

The Sixth Form

12. Attainment in the GCE A Level and AS Level examinations is rising. It was well below the national average in 2001 (in the bottom five per cent of all schools nationally). In 2002 there was significant improvement and the AS and A Level performance rose to being below the national average, rather than well below. It was average in 2003 and the college is forecasting grades for 2004 that are likely to be similar. Attainment is rising because of the improvements in the provision for Sixth Formers, especially the quality of teaching.

13. In 2003, the difference overall between the attainment of boys and girls was no greater than it was nationally and this reflects the current position.

14. The GCE A Level subjects with grades above the national average in 2003 were art and design, psychology and history. The lowest performing subject was German, although the numbers entered were too small to make valid any comparison with national indicators.

15. This year results have continued to improve. Students are achieving well overall – making good progress from below average levels of attainment on entry to the Sixth Form. The table below shows the attainment and achievement of students currently in the Sixth Form in those subjects which were inspected in depth. Other subjects were sampled and judgements have been included where there was enough evidence for them to be secure.

SUBJECT	ATTAINMENT	ACHIEVEMENT
English	Above average	Good
Mathematics	Average	Very good
Chemistry	Above average	Very good
History	Average	Good
Leisure and tourism	Above average	Good
Business education	Average	Good
Art	Above average	Very good
French	Average	Good
German	Average	Good

16. Literacy, numeracy and ICT standards in the Sixth Form are average.

Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

How well are students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities developed?

Students' attitudes, behaviour and personal development are **good** and in the Sixth Form they are **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students enjoy college and their attendance is very good
- Students relate very well to each other and their behaviour is good
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall

Commentary

17. Students enjoy their experiences in college. They describe it as a friendly place and they feel well supported. They apply themselves conscientiously in almost all lessons and participate well in activities. They accept responsibility very well, for example through the influential college council. Students get on very well together and are mutually supportive. Instances of anti-social conduct are few. Most students behave very well in lessons, but a small minority has difficulty exercising self-control. When teaching is not sufficiently stimulating, some students can be disruptive. The number of exclusions incurred is broadly in line with the average for secondary schools. The college's strategies for managing and improving behaviour are good. A behaviour support unit assists students very effectively if they have difficulties coping with the standards of discipline required of them in lessons.

18. Students with SEN have positive attitudes to their work. Relationships are excellent and students value the support they receive. Special educational needs students generally work hard and behave very well in the SEN department, enabling themselves and others to make good and often very good progress in learning. There is a need to accelerate the re-integration process for some students to ensure that they have as much contact as possible with mainstream classes.

19. Attendance is well above the average for secondary schools. Absence owing to family holidays taken during term time is more than that usually found in similar schools. Punctuality is very good: almost all students arrive on time for the start of the school day.

Ethnic background of pupils

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British
White – Irish
White – any other White background
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean
Mixed – White and Black African
Mixed – White and Asian
Mixed – any other mixed background
Chinese
Parent/student preferred not to say

Exclusions in the last school year

No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
543	43	1
1	0	0
8	0	0
3	0	0
1	0	0
3	0	0
1	0	0
1	0	0
7	3	0

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

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year was 93.1 %

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	6.7	School data	0.2
National data	7.2	National data	1.1

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

20. The provision for students' spiritual development is satisfactory and has improved since the previous inspection. In art, music, drama and religious education students learn to experience a range of feelings, perceptions and moods. Feelings of success, challenge, failure, bereavement and faith are explored. Nevertheless, spiritual experiences or appreciation are not deliberately planned into schemes of work in all subjects and opportunities for reflection are too few.

21. Students develop very well their awareness of the moral and social issues of today's society. They know right from wrong and successfully put moral principles into practice. They are co-operative, tolerant and respectful of the views of others: they demonstrate their concern for others through their support for charities.

22. Students' cultural development is satisfactory. Students are aware of their country's heritage and traditions and local history. Their studies include learning about other faiths and peoples. Visits abroad and a special link with an African village add to their awareness of other lifestyles. Experiences in the arts, food technology and other activities extend students' knowledge, for example of the music of other genres. Students' awareness of the implications of living in a multi-cultural society is under-developed.

Sixth form

23. Students are well motivated and enjoy their experiences in the Sixth Form. Their conduct is mature and they are committed to achieving well in their chosen subjects. Some students lack self-confidence in unfamiliar situations and are reluctant to participate. All, however, are willing to accept responsibility – as prefects, for example, and by helping younger students. They organise their own social facilities very successfully. The quality of their involvement is good in the enrichment activities that are organised for them. Their attendance and punctuality are very good.

Students' views

24. Students express very positive views about the college and the Sixth Form. They say they felt very well informed about courses and life in the Sixth Form and the induction process enabled them to make a good start. They feel that they are able to make very well informed choices about higher education and they are happy that advice and guidance about other routes are available if they require it. They describe relationships with staff as excellent and feel very well supported. Their work is closely monitored and they receive all the help they need to achieve well. They appreciate the opportunities for enrichment. Experiences abroad are enjoyable and enhance relevant studies. They say that access to computers is satisfactory for brief word processing work but not for extensive use. They would like to have interactive facilities between their home computers and the college's network.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE COLLEGE

The quality of education that the college provides is **good**. Teaching, links with parents and the community and the college's care for students are all strong features and they contribute to students' good standards of work. The curriculum caters well for the needs of students up to Year 11. The small size of the sixth form restricts the range of courses that can be offered. More courses are already planned for the next academic year.

Teaching and learning

Good teaching, very good in the Sixth Form, ensures that students learn well in the large majority of lessons.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Lessons are well planned, with a good variety of activities to interest the students.
- Students are told what they are to learn at the start of the lesson, so that they are clear about what is expected of them.
- Relationships are very good, so that in almost all lessons students are willing to learn.
- Teachers generally have high expectations of their students and students respond well.
- In some lessons the pace of learning is too slow and the work lacks challenge.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 108 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
5 (4%)	32 (30%)	42 (39%)	26 (24%)	3 (3%)	0	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.

Example of outstanding practice

In an excellent lesson, a Year 11 English class learnt how to write a successful commentary on a poem for their GCSE examination.

The teacher had planned in great detail a very useful series of class and small group activities to teach her students how to comment on imagery when discussing a poem. She taught them to look at the layers of meaning in the poem, to annotate it and then to respond sensitively in an appropriate style. The combination of high expectations and rigorous questioning to extend their understanding was exceptional. The key to her success, however, was the way in which she drew out what was required in order to gain a mark that would bring an A or B grade at GCSE. The students made excellent progress. By the end of the lesson all knew how to improve their own work and gain high marks.

Commentary

25. Almost three-quarters of the teaching observed in the college was good, very good or excellent. The best teaching is stimulating and enthusiastic, partly because teachers are very knowledgeable in their subject areas. They share their enthusiasm well with their students, who are motivated and interested as a result. In an excellent chemistry lesson with a Year 11 class, the teacher's own knowledge was inspiring and she had very high expectations of the students' ability to understand the process of metallic bonding. Excellent demonstrations increased their understanding and the very rapid pace ensured that much was learnt. In all the good, very good and excellent lessons, the teachers' planning is detailed and provides for a good range of activities in the lessons. This means that students generally learn better because their teachers make their lessons varied and interesting. There is a very good range of teaching and learning styles, including opportunities for both independent and collaborative work. These are planned with the requirements of the lesson objectives in mind, so that the sequence of activities naturally leads the students towards meeting their objectives. Teachers enjoy very good relationships with their classes, which leads to students enjoying the lessons and working hard to please them. Teachers use praise well to motivate and encourage their students. The levels of challenge are generally high, extending the students and ensuring that they achieve very well in many of their lessons.

26. The very good work that the college has done on developing teaching strategies has improved teaching through the college. The Key Stage 3 strategy has been implemented well and all teachers make good use of the underlying principles in their planning. Examples of very good teaching were observed in almost all subject areas, across all year groups. Only three unsatisfactory lessons were observed, out of over one hundred observed. There has been good improvement since the last inspection.

27. Where teaching is less than good, many of the characteristics of good teaching are still present. Relationships are positive. Lessons are generally well planned and prepared thoroughly. The planning takes account of the needs of the whole class, though not always of all individuals within it. Achievement is no better than satisfactory in these lessons and sometimes unsatisfactory. An example occurred in a design and technology lesson, in which the higher attaining students completed the task that the class had been given quickly and easily. The students were not challenged, learned little and the lesson was unsatisfactory as a result.

28. Teaching is very good in English and art. Across the rest of the curriculum, teaching is at least good in Years 7 to 11 in mathematics, science, history, geography, music, modern foreign languages, physical education, ICT and drama. Teaching is satisfactory overall in citizenship and religious education, where pressure on staffing leads to classes being taught by teachers who are not specialists in the subject, but is good from the specialist teachers.

The quality of teaching and learning in the Sixth Form

29. Teaching and learning are very good in the Sixth Form. Achievement is very good because the students have great confidence in the knowledge of their teachers. They respect them and are very ready to take part in lessons. The teachers' enthusiasm and the individual interest they take in their students help to create a very positive ethos in class. Independence is encouraged very well

and, as a result, students learn very well both in and out of class. They are set challenging tasks for research and respond very well to these, working hard to succeed. Relationships are excellent and teachers use praise judiciously to encourage their students and get the best from them.

30. Teaching in the Sixth Form was found to be very good in art, history, chemistry and mathematics. Very good teaching was seen in the geography lesson that was observed. Teaching is good in English, French, German, business studies and leisure and tourism. It was never less than good in any subject observed.

The quality of teaching and learning for students with SEN

31. Teaching and learning are good overall, and very good in the study support department. Subject teachers know the SEN students well and are generally sensitive to their needs in lessons. Many make good use of resources adapted to specific needs, such as writing frames and simplified worksheets. The setting system (placing students into higher or lower classes according to their attainment in a subject) enables better attention to be given to the needs of SEN students. The classes with a high proportion of students with special needs often have the support of teaching assistants (TAs). Where TAs are present they work well with the teacher and ensure that SEN students make at least the same progress as others in the class, and sometimes more progress, as was seen in one food technology lesson. Both teachers and TAs who have a direct teaching role with SEN students withdrawn from lessons teach very well, encouraging them, evaluating their achievements and recording their progress on file.

The curriculum

The curriculum is broad and is enhanced by a good range of extra-curricular activities. Different types of courses are being introduced for students who do not wish to attend further education. The Sixth Form curriculum does not meet the statutory requirement to teach religious education.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The provision of different teaching programmes for lower, mid and higher attaining students meets their needs and aspirations well.
- The provision for gifted and talented students and for students with SEN is very good.
- All students have the same access to the curriculum.
- The good range of extra-curricular activities contributes to students' learning and achievement.
- Sixth form students are prepared well to enter college or employment.
- Senior managers are aware that the curriculum in the Sixth Form lacks breadth.

Commentary

32. The curriculum for Years 7 to 9 is broad and balanced, covering all the subjects of the national curriculum, drama, personal social and health education (including citizenship) and religious education. The timetable is organised over a two-week cycle for all year groups, which helps to ensure a good balance of coverage. The curriculum offers a satisfactory range of courses for students in Years 7 to 11 who wish to go on to further education. It is a policy of the college that most students study a language up to GCSE. All students take a technology subject up to the end of Year 11. All students study religious education, with an increasing number taking it as a GCSE course. There is also a vocational course in leisure and tourism and a certificated work skills course for lower attaining students. A vocational course leading to a national qualification in information and communication technology (CISCO) has been introduced in response to local needs.

33. Equality of access and opportunity for students within the existing curriculum is good. The curriculum is planned to ensure that most students achieve well. In English classes in Year 9, for example, boys and girls are taught separately. This is to counter underachievement by boys at the end of Year 9 and has been successful in raising standards. There are different 'pathways' in the

curriculum to meet the needs of different students in Years 10 and 11. A 'blue' route for lower attainers leads to five or six GCSE examination entries and work-related learning courses in construction or administration at the local college of further education. The 'yellow' route leads to six or seven GCSE examination entries at the end of Year 11 and a GNVQ course. The 'green' route leads to at least nine GCSE entries, and as many as 11 for the highest attaining students (on accelerated learning 'pathways'). These pathways allow students, if it is appropriate, to study three separate sciences and to be entered a year early for GCSE mathematics.

34. Students are grouped in many subjects according to their attainment. As a result, higher attaining students achieve well and there is little difference between the attainment of boys and girls. Students who have been identified as having special gifts and talents are identified centrally and by departments and most departments offer extension tasks to provide additional opportunities for the higher attainers to develop their skills. There is very good provision for these students. Three are members of the National Association for Gifted and Talented Youth (NAGTY) based in Warwick University. Twelve more have applied for membership. A particularly successful venture was the Year 9 visit last year to Corpus Christi College, Oxford, where more able students attended a workshop on 'code breaking'. Parents are fully involved in the work for gifted students and are kept in touch with developments through a 'More Able Newsletter'. Awards are given to the highest attaining students in each subject area.

Example of outstanding practice

The provision for gifted and talented students is particularly effective.

Students who are in the top five to ten per cent in terms of academic scores from Year 6 data are identified in Year 7 and placed on a special register. Subject departments are asked to further identify students who display emergent talents or academic skills, in particular in the creative and performing arts areas, during the first half term of Year 7. All staff have copies of the complete register and are encouraged to provide exemplars of exceptional work for inclusion in the more able students' portfolios of work. The college has piloted the joint local authority initiative with the National Association for Able Children in Education (NACE). The association has set up a new national award and the college is well on the way to being one of the first secondary schools in the country to achieve it.

35. The study support department, which supports students with SEN, makes very good provision for those who are on the register of special needs and is very effective in enabling them to confront and overcome the barriers to learning that they face. The department functions as a resource base for subject teachers. It is also a sanctuary for vulnerable students and a specialist resource for teaching low achieving students, in particular those experiencing literacy and numeracy problems. It provides an inclusion base for students at risk of permanent exclusion and a temporary respite from mainstream lessons for those whose personal and social difficulties may cause them to disrupt them. It has a strong team of trained and experienced teaching assistants (TAs), including two senior TAs, and the part time support of three special needs teachers.

36. Behaviour improvement plans (BIPs) are set up for students who do not respond effectively and a pastoral support plan is given to students whose difficulties are more complex and who need the pastoral support of tutors and heads of year to manage their education. An appropriate range of external specialist services is available to support the needs of different individuals and groups of students. There is a link teacher in each department, who liaises on a regular basis with the special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO), in order to report on and track the progress of SEN students across the college.

37. The wide range of extra-curricular opportunities enhances students' learning. The physical education department runs teams and coaching sessions after college, for example, as well as arranging visits to national sporting events. There are regular music and drama productions, trips abroad, science and technology clubs, theatre trips and a youth club.

38. The provision for personal, social and health education (PSHE) is satisfactory. It includes good coverage of health and sex education. Careers guidance is part of the PSHE programme and meets the needs of the students well. All students have access to additional support using ICT facilities. They have one week's work experience and an interview with a Connexions adviser in

Years 10 and 11. Citizenship is taught through PSHE and through other subject areas, such as drama. Provision is just satisfactory, but needs to be planned more thoroughly. There are some good aspects. Skills such as decision making are taught well in drama and there are good projects within year groups: in Year 10, for example, students raise funds for the Old Lashibi School in Ghana.

39. The accommodation is satisfactory overall. Some departments, such as science, have good, refurbished teaching areas. There are still some staffing difficulties, leading to some classes in physical education, mathematics and religious education being taught by non-specialist teachers. However, the situation overall is improving and the college is working hard to solve the problems that remain. Staffing is satisfactory overall. Educational resources are also satisfactory. Some departments have difficulty gaining access to computers, but this is a temporary situation. Further computers were on order at the time of the inspection and the ratio of computers to students is already above the national average.

40. There has been good improvement since the last inspection, when some statutory requirements were not met and some subjects had insufficient time to meet the demands of the National Curriculum.

The curriculum in the Sixth Form

41. Considering the small size of the Sixth Form, students have good opportunities to study a range of courses for A and AS Level. However, the choice is relatively narrow and, to meet the needs of all, more AS and vocational courses are needed. The range of courses has expanded since the last inspection. All three sciences are now taught, along with music, psychology, business studies, German, French, graphics and GNVQ leisure and tourism. The college has recognised that the curriculum does not offer enough courses, especially outside the traditional academic GCE A Level fare, and plans are in place to extend it next year. The college is to become part of a federation of three schools, offering an enhanced Sixth Form curriculum in conjunction with the local further education college.

42. The timetable allows for students to take part in enrichment activities, which they enjoy. Students in the Sixth Form who have SEN receive the same very good support as in the main college. There are very good enrichment opportunities, including a drugs education project that leads to students teaching drugs education in Year 8 health education classes, after they have attended weekend and residential courses with the police force.

43. Students receive good support in their quest for employment or university places. Teachers have established very good contacts and they draw on these when necessary.

44. The accommodation is satisfactory overall. It is unsatisfactory for leisure and tourism, which does not have a base room. The Sixth Form is staffed well: the favourable staff to student ratio and the quality of the teaching are significant factors in its overall success. Learning resources are satisfactory. As in the main college, some departments have difficulty gaining access to computers, but this is a temporary situation. This is currently affecting opportunities in art, but the overall provision for art is very good despite this problem.

Care, guidance and support

How well are students cared for, guided and supported?

Students are well cared for, guided and supported.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The standard of pastoral care is very good.
- Provision for support, advice and guidance based on monitoring is very good.
- Students' views are sought, valued and acted upon.

Commentary

45. Relationships between teachers and students are constructive, mutually respectful and friendly. Students feel valued, secure and supported because of the way they are treated. They have no hesitation about confiding in their teachers and helpers. The procedures for health and safety, child protection and children in care are appropriately implemented. The college is well supported by specialist education and health agencies. Suitable accommodation is not available for students who are unwell, because the college does not have a medical room – although one is available in the adjacent leisure centre in case of an emergency.

46. The arrangements for transfer from primary schools and induction into Year 7 are very good. Students and parents are well informed and receive good advice when it comes to the times for subject choices for Year 10 and choosing between post 16 opportunities. The college council is highly respected. Its representations receive serious consideration by senior staff and governors and frequently lead to significant improvements being made in facilities or the way the college is run.

47. The termly academic monitoring reviews inform students and parents about progress very effectively. Students know how they are doing and the system of targeting provides them with a clear focus for improvement. When asked, they all know their targets for each subject, what their current level is and how they can improve. Study support is available for students who struggle to achieve their target grade and, for example, to help students on vocational courses to catch up with their academic studies. Teachers mark work very helpfully, most giving guidance on the strengths and weaknesses in each major piece of work. Overall, the assessment of students' academic and personal development is very good, especially in the sixth form, and contributes to their good achievement.

Example of outstanding practice

Excellent assessment systems in English help students to raise the standards of their work.

A key strength is the way in which students are involved in setting their own targets, reviewing their progress towards them and reflecting on how they can further improve their work. They are supported in this by the excellent quality of teachers' marking, which makes very explicit the areas which need to be improved. Consequently, students are very well informed about their own progress and take a responsible attitude towards working to develop their skills further.

Target setting and assessment are part of an on-going, long-term process. They figure at an early stage of teachers' planning and then build up over time to form a 'track record' of each student's progress through the college and into the Sixth Form. This enables teachers to identify under-achievement or strong potential and to put the necessary support into place, especially in Years 9 and 11.

Sixth form

48. Students receive good information and guidance about the courses available and what life will be like in the Sixth Form. Induction arrangements include sessions to develop study skills. Staff and students enjoy close and constructive relationships and personal help is readily available. The academic monitoring system informs students very effectively about the quality of their work and how they are progressing towards their desired goals. Coursework is regularly reviewed and students are clearly focused on how to improve and the next stage to achieve. Students receive very good advice, guidance and preparation for higher education, and good information and advice are available about other opportunities beyond the Sixth Form.

49. Students are encouraged to take responsibility for their own community and to offer support to the students in the years below them. A good range of enrichment experiences is available. Social and private study facilities are adequate.

Assessment of students with SEN

50. Very good assessment systems are in place to enable the early identification of the special needs of individual students. There are no students at an early stage in acquiring English. All statutory requirements for students with a statement of special educational need are fully met.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

How well does the college work in partnership with parents, other schools and the community?

The college has a **very good** partnership with parents. It has **good** links with other schools and the community.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents have a high regard for the college and are supportive.
- The college works closely with its partner primary schools.
- Involvement with the community contributes well to students' learning and personal development.

Commentary

51. Parents are pleased with the quality of education and care that is provided. They are confident in the college and the views they express are almost all positive. The concerns of a small number of parents about homework are partially justified. Whilst the homework set usefully supplements lessons, it is not consistently set in all subjects. The reasons for discontent with extra-curricular activities were problems with transport after school rather than the lack of opportunities available. Parents are generally very well informed about the life and work of the college. Annual college reports and curricular information are very well presented. Parents' views are sought, respected and acted upon. Parents' attendance is high at consultation meetings and performances that involve their own children. All parents of students who have special education needs attend the periodic reviews. The parents and college association arranges events and raises substantial funds for the college.

52. Relationships with parents are very good and the college engages the co-operation of most with regard to attendance, strategies to support their children, for example about behaviour, and signing their planners. The college is right to want to involve parents more in their children's learning and in the daily life of the college.

53. The arrangements with primary schools and colleges of further and higher education are successful in promoting curricular continuity, shared resources and the smooth transfer of students and students.

54. Involvement with the community provides students with many educational and cultural experiences, some of which take place abroad. Visits to places of interest, such as art galleries and a castle, considerably enhance studies. Visitors, such as a dance specialist, contribute to learning and achievement. The college celebrates festivals in a local church, participates in civic events and supports senior citizens and numerous charities. Local businesses support the college financially and with work experience. An education business partnership provides good support.

Sixth Form

55. The college continues to foster very good partnerships with parents; good links with the local community are used well to enhance the curriculum. Visits from local businesses bring valuable, first-hand insights to business studies students and help to raise their understanding and

achievement. Links with universities are firmly in place and facilitate students' smooth transition to higher education. Parents are very happy with the Sixth Form provision for students, which continues to build on the good achievement reached in Year 11. They value the regularity of communication with staff and the fact that they are kept suitably informed if there are any problems or concerns. The progress reports are well received.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The college is led and managed well and this contributes to its success.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The leadership and management of the college by senior staff are good.
- The leadership of the college has worked very effectively to raise standards of teaching and is now concentrating, rightly, on raising attainment.
- The performance of the college is monitored well and the information is used to raise standards.
- There has been good improvement since the last inspection.

Commentary

56. The leadership and management of the college have earned the respect of the students, staff, parents and local community. The responses to the Ofsted questionnaire for parents showed that around 90 per cent agreed that the college is well led.

57. The headteacher seeks to involve all members of staff in the process of decision making and consults widely with teachers, parents and students. She has established a working environment in which all feel valued. She is supported well by the senior team and this group works very well together and has complementary strengths. They support staff well and set them challenging, but achievable, targets.

58. The college's capacity for future improvement is good, because its work is assessed and monitored well and appropriate action taken. This is a small college and this imposes additional burdens on the senior managers; for example, all, including the headteacher, have teaching commitments. Much of the financial work that in larger schools would be delegated to a bursar is the responsibility of the senior team. Nevertheless, they have been able to analyse the strengths and weaknesses of the college and to provide the leadership necessary to correct the fall in examination results that affected the college after the last report. The college improvement plans are detailed and have been implemented effectively. The priorities for improvement are appropriate and there is clear evidence that progress is being made.

59. The school improvement planning is at an advanced stage of implementation and is an important factor in the improvement of the performance of the college. The work in subject areas is regularly monitored. Established heads of department have been trained in their role and most give good or very good leadership, but there is more variability in subjects that have new or inexperienced leaders. Leadership and management range from very good – in English, art and music, for example – to unsatisfactory in religious education (where a newly qualified teacher is making a good start at organising a department that has lacked effective leadership in the past). The management of year groups is strong; the year heads give very good guidance to form tutors and counsel students well. The management of the implementation of the new behaviour policy has been good and has resulted in an improvement in students' behaviour and attitudes.

60. The SENCO leads a strong team of special needs teachers and teaching assistants (TAs). She works very hard to manage the complex provision effectively and is a very good, knowledgeable and experienced leader. She manages the study support department very efficiently, keeping very good records on each student and ensuring that very good links are maintained with parents and the external specialist agencies who are available to her.

61. There is a strong commitment to inclusion. In order to meet the needs of all students, including the relatively high proportion of low attainers, the 14 to 16 curriculum has been developed to provide a good range of appropriate courses. The SEN department has initiated certificated courses in basic skills for those who will benefit. Although there are no students in wheel chairs at the college currently, disabled access is good and suitable toilet facilities are planned. The provision for the gifted and talented students is managed very well.

62. The governing body makes a satisfactory contribution to the work of the college, although it has not been able to comply with the statutory requirement to hold a daily act of collective worship for all. All governors are linked to curriculum areas and many visit regularly to monitor and support the college. Many of them have considerable professional expertise outside education that they bring to their role for the benefit of the college – in management, for example, or local government. They take their role seriously and are effective as critical friends of the college, questioning and testing in a number of areas, such as performance in national tests, budgeting and health and safety. They have a sound understanding of the college's strengths and weaknesses.

63. New technology is used well, both to assist in the administration of the college and to help in teaching. The administrative and clerical staff and the classroom assistants are deployed effectively and support the teachers well to ensure that they can concentrate on their primary roles. The caretaking and cleaning staff are managed well to ensure that the college buildings and grounds are clean, tidy and attractive.

Leadership and management of the Sixth Form

64. The leadership and management of the Sixth Form are good. The senior team works hard to improve the curriculum and thereby attract more students to the good provision that is made. Federation links are being developed with two other local schools and it is expected that these will broaden the curriculum offered for students in all three schools. The head of Sixth Form and the Sixth Form teaching team work well together to provide an effective learning experience that is valued by students and parents.

65. The Head of Sixth Form has worked very successfully to raise students' aspirations and create a climate in which students take their work very seriously and work hard to raise their standards. This is part of the reason for the steady improvement in attainment in the Sixth Form. Over the past three years, attainment levels overall have risen from being amongst the lowest in the country to being in line with the average nationally. Sixth form prizes are offered in all subject departments to those whose effort and achievement is judged to be outstanding. The Sixth Form is managed well and the tutors receive good guidance to help them to give very good personal and academic support and advice to the students in their care.

66. The further development of the Sixth Form is being managed well. Good links, including video-conferencing links, are being established with the local federation of schools and these will benefit students by broadening the curriculum and offering opportunities for further personal and social development. Good leadership has led to the extension of the good enrichment opportunities, such as visits from overseas graduates, theatre trips and Business Challenge opportunities. The careers provision is well managed. The Connexions service offers very good guidance on further and higher education and on routes to modern apprenticeships. This guidance is well supported by the very good careers library and by the tutorial arrangements, which ensure that students plan and evaluate their work effectively, building up a useful personal progress file.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	1,854,330.00	Balance from previous year	13,090.00
Total expenditure	1,877,750.00	Balance carried forward to the next	-23,420.00
Expenditure per student	3161.20		

67. The management of the college's finances is good. All the necessary controls are in place, and the college has received a favourable audit report. There was a deficit at the end of the last financial year. This was the result of extra expenditure required to recruit experienced teachers. A decision was made to replace teachers who were leaving the college with staff of a high calibre and the effectiveness of this is evident in the improvement in performance of key departments this year. It caused the staffing budget to rise beyond expected levels. The deficit has been corrected in the current year and the budget is on course to be in balance. Special educational needs funding and all additional funding is spent very appropriately. The principles of best value are applied well. Significant savings have been made, for example, through the actions of the governors, who used contacts in the business world to supply the college with a number of new computers free of charge. Income and expenditure per student are above the national average, because of the costs of running a small school. Students achieve well, however, in terms of both academic and personal development, and the college is providing satisfactory value for money.

68. The Sixth Form is small. It is not cost effective and is being subsidised from the budget for the main college. It gives unsatisfactory value for money, but makes a valuable contribution to the ethos of the college and to the opportunities in the immediate area for students to continue their education beyond the age of 16. There is no other local provision.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Overall, provision in English is **very good**.

- Attainment is above average and rising.
- Teaching is very good and promotes very good achievement.
- Leadership and management are very good.
- There is a very good programme of additional support and development for students who require this.
- The use of assessment procedures is excellent.
- There is no planning for the use of ICT skills.

Commentary

69. In 2003, standards of attainment in national curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 were above average. They were also above average in comparison with schools whose students had similar attainment when they joined the college. Students enter the college with attainment which is below the national average and evidence seen during the inspection indicates that some aspects of their work at this stage are well below what is seen nationally. They achieve very well, including those with SEN, in response to very good teaching and reach above average standards by the end of Year 9. They progress particularly well in developing an analytical and sensitive approach to literature, using a good specialised vocabulary in order to express their ideas with clarity and precision.

70. Students start their GCSE course in Year 10 with previous attainment above the national average. Standards at the end of Year 11 in GCSE examinations in 2003 were close to the national average and the achievement of these students was, overall, unsatisfactory. The attainment of students currently in Year 11 is above what is seen nationally and realistic predictions based on very a good range of assessment information indicate that the percentage of students attaining grades A*-C will rise in 2004 to exceed the national average for 2003. Students currently in Year 11, including those with SEN, are achieving well. They make particularly good progress in planning and structuring their written work to meet the demands of examination tasks and in making very useful notes and annotations that form a good basis for revision. The attainment of students who also took English Literature in 2003 was in line with the national average, but has improved in 2004 and students are now achieving well and are reaching above average standards.

71. The quality of teaching is very good overall and none seen was less than good. Lessons are planned to respond to students' identified needs across the attainment range. They include a wide range of activities and groupings in order to maintain interest and commitment (particularly amongst the boys) and students show interest, enthusiasm and the ability to work hard. Teachers offer a high level of expectation and challenge, along with good support, and students respond particularly well to very good questioning and opportunities for discussion. Teachers make excellent use of assessment in order to track students' progress; their marking is very informative about what students need to do in order to improve. Students are particularly knowledgeable about their own progress and reflect responsibly on the areas in which they need to improve. They are fully involved in setting their own targets and in measuring the progress they are making towards them. The quality of teaching stimulates students' interest and promotes a love of the subject.

72. Leadership and management of the subject are very good. There is a very good focus on raising attainment. The head of department has correctly identified priorities for development. As a result there are now very good procedures, some of which are innovative, to improve boys' attainment. There is a very good programme of additional support and extension for those who require it, along with very good communication with parents. A good start has been made on updating the schemes of work to provide clear guidance and advice. These do not, however, identify opportunities for the use of ICT skills (although a lack of facilities for this means that it would be difficult to implement such plans). In general, students do not have enough experience of the use of ICT and teachers rely on them being able to use such facilities at home, if they are available. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

73. Students' use of literacy skills across all areas of the curriculum is just satisfactory overall. In music, students read aloud well. Students' ability to skim read is enhanced by the use they make of this in modern foreign languages.

74. Standards of writing are at best satisfactory. In some subjects, for example science, below average writing skills adversely affect students' ability to meet the demands of the subject. Although in most subjects there is an emphasis on the key vocabulary specific to the subject, students have, in general, only limited opportunities to carry out extended writing tasks. In history, students are offered good opportunities to write for a range of purposes, but what some students write is inaccurate and unclear. In a number of other subjects there is inconsistency in the thoroughness with which teachers mark errors of spelling and punctuation and insufficient use is made of 'writing frames' to support students who find it difficult to structure their written work.

75. Speaking skills are developed satisfactorily. In general, students make satisfactory and sometimes good use of discussion in order to learn from the ideas of others and most students can explain their ideas adequately. In music, higher attaining students are articulate and confident. In design technology and ICT students have good opportunities for discussion and can explain their ideas clearly.

Modern foreign languages

Provision for modern foreign languages is **good**. In German it is **very good**.

Strengths and weaknesses

- German GCSE results in 2003 were good.
- Boys achieve as well as girls in German and in several French classes.
- Standards in French are improving.
- Teachers make students aware of the level at which they are working and what they need to do to raise that level.

76. In 2003, teachers judged that higher than average proportions of students reached the nationally expected National Curriculum Levels 4 and 5 at the end of Year 9. In the current Year 9 standards in French are broadly average overall in writing and reading, but oral skills are below average. Achievement is good; students are acquiring a wide range of vocabulary and structures. In German (taught to higher attainers in Years 8 and 9) standards in Year 9 are above the national average. Both boys and girls speak and write sentences from memory, using a good range of vocabulary and tenses and some complex structures. Most have good accents and understand well. This is very good achievement in less than two years of study.

77. In 2003 GCSE examinations, German results were much better than French. In both languages all students gained a pass grade, which is better than the national average. Whilst German results were broadly average overall, the proportion of grades A* to C was well above the national average and standards are currently above average in Year 11. French results were significantly below the national average and amongst the poorest in the college.

78. Standards in French are now improving, however. Writing, reading and listening skills are broadly average by Year 11, and several students reach well above average standards, but oral skills are weak. Many students across the college have poor accents, pronounce silent letters and lack fluency when they speak French.

79. Students with SEN and most of minority ethnic heritage achieve in line with others in their set. A few achieve very well. Boys achieve as well as girls in many classes as a result of good relationships and good class management.

80. Teaching and learning are good overall. In French they vary from satisfactory to good. In German they vary from satisfactory to excellent. Good relationships and extensive use of praise in all classes encourage participation. Teachers are sound or strong linguists. Lessons are well planned, learning objectives are clear and a range of activities hold students' interest. The very good features are: extensive use of the foreign language by both teacher and students, a very good variety of well-sequenced tasks, good pace, time used to the full and good use of humour and games which make learning fun. The teachers extend the students' language and consolidate it well so that they use new structures confidently. In satisfactory lessons, excessive use of English, sometimes a slow pace and insufficient correction of poor accents or language prevent the students from making as much progress as they could. Much marking is regular and careful.

Year 8 students in their second term of learning German make excellent progress in their studies as a result of outstanding teaching.

Students settled quickly and looked at their learning target: to express varied opinions about 16 new school subjects. Cards with 16 subjects written on them were placed randomly on a white board. Students had 2 minutes in pairs to guess what they were, by drawing on their knowledge of German and other languages to deduce meanings. They guessed the large majority. The teacher then pronounced and used a mime for each subject. Words were well reinforced by a rapid number of class and pair competitions and games involving mime and speaking. They practised expressing their opinions about subjects, before listening to a tape of German students speaking about them and were able to abstract key phrases and match pictures and speech. By the end of the lesson they expressed fluently, accurately and confidently, from memory, five or six different opinions about the various subjects in both speech and writing. The rapid pace and exclusive use of German by both teacher and students were major factors in this excellent achievement and enjoyment.

81. Leadership has been considerably restrained by having to cope with significant staffing difficulties, but is, nevertheless, satisfactory. The management of these difficulties and the support of staff have been good. It is of major credit that the department has sustained a good enrichment programme of visits to France and Germany. Recently the staff situation has become more stable and a good team spirit prevails. The department is well resourced and equipped other than with computers; this situation will be resolved in a few weeks.

82. Improvement is satisfactory since the last inspection. German has continued its steady upward curve. Standards in French dipped significantly after the last inspection but are now improving.

MATHEMATICS

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE results in 2003 were significantly better than in previous years.
- The quality of teaching is good, which leads to good learning.
- Teachers sometimes do not spend enough time checking on students' understanding before moving on to new concepts.
- Teachers form very positive relationships with their students and insist on very good behaviour; as a result, students' attitudes to learning are very positive.
- The quality of leadership and management of mathematics is good, despite many changes in staffing over the last few years.
- The department uses ICT very well to enhance the learning of mathematics.

Commentary

83. Results at the end of Year 9 were close to the national average when compared to all schools. In 2003, there was no significant difference between the results of boys and girls. Considering the attainment levels when students arrived at the college, which were below average, students have achieved well in Years 7 to 9. Results are not as good as in English, but are better than in science. The trend over the last few years shows that results are improving at a greater rate than nationally, and climbed to be very close to the national average by 2003.

84. Results at the end of Year 11 were close to the national average in the GCSE examinations in 2003. Over the last few years results have been below or well below national averages. There was a sharp rise in attainment in last year's results, when the percentage of grades A*-C jumped significantly to be very close to the national average. The percentage of the very highest grades (A* and A) was much lower than the national average. When the results at grades A*-C for 2003 were analysed, girls' results were below the national average for girls, but boys performed slightly above the national average for boys. However, over the last four years, there is no significant difference between boys' and girls' results. Students achieve well in lessons because of the quality of the teaching.

85. Students enter the college with levels of attainment in mathematics that are below national averages. The lowest attaining students in Year 7 have very limited numeracy skills on entry. However, the evidence of frustration in the wide ability groups in Year 7 mentioned in the last report has disappeared, as students are now grouped by ability (setted). By Year 9, standards of work seen are close to average. Higher attaining students calculate volumes of prisms confidently and use statistics well. They have a clear grasp of correlation and the use of scatter graphs. Students then carry out high quality investigations to apply their statistical skills. Lower attaining students show good understanding of geometrical transformations and produce good diagrams to illustrate their knowledge. Higher attaining students in Year 11 are stretched in their mathematical thinking by advanced examples in trigonometry, and are able to solve complicated problems in three-dimensional geometry. Middle attaining students have a good understanding of quadratic graphs. Lower attainers mainly concentrate on basic arithmetic. Students with SEN are provided with appropriate mathematical experiences. Overall, attainment is now close to the national average and students are achieving well, because teachers have a very good understanding of their respective needs in mathematics.

86. The quality of teaching and learning in mathematics is good. Over half of the lessons are good or very good. Teachers' command of mathematics is very good, and they confidently challenge students in their learning by introducing high quality concepts. Planning is good, and teachers make a considerable effort to match the challenge in lessons to the capabilities of the students. Sensitive help is given in lessons and teachers build very good relationships with students. Teachers use three-part lessons regularly, following the recommendations of the National

Numeracy Strategy. They break lessons into small parts and change tasks for students regularly, which is good practice. However, sometimes they do not check that all students have understood the work before moving on to new ideas. They expect students to work hard, and only accept the highest standards. They control students very well, which leads to very mature behaviour and good achievement in lessons. In discussion, students state that they like the way in which the subject is taught and appreciate being treated in a caring and mature manner. Students respond well to challenges from teachers and work very enthusiastically.

87. Teachers use ICT widely in lessons. This is an improvement on the last report, which stated that computers in the department were old and underused. In a very good lesson, students used computers to match expressions and generate terms of a number pattern. The teacher brought the class together at the end of the lesson to give an excellent summary of what had been learnt. Finally, the computers were used to generate mathematical questions in a 'Millionaire' game: students responded very well.

88. Assessment of students' work is good. The department keeps detailed records of test and assessment results; these are carefully analysed to determine the achievement of students and matched against external examination results. Targets are set and discussed with students. Students know the levels at which they are working and understand the importance of their target grades.

89. The leadership and management of the department are good. The acting head of department is clear about priorities, and leads the team well. He has a good knowledge of the results produced by the department, and uses this data to identify trends. Expectations are being raised by targeting more students to the intermediate tier at GCSE and fewer students to the foundation tier. The acting head of department monitors teaching and makes recommendations to improve it. Planning and organisation within the department are good. The team of teachers works very well together; ideas are shared and students are well served.

Mathematics across the curriculum

90. A mathematics teacher has taken responsibility for numeracy across the college. The mathematics department ran a whole college in-service training day. After this training, the college established priorities so that other subject departments knew what the mathematics department did, and when students in certain year groups covered various topics. 'How to' cards have been produced by the numeracy co-ordinator, covering mental arithmetic, the four rules of number, graphs, statistics and other mathematics topics. An audit was undertaken in 2003, which led to further development of the 'How to' cards for use in other departments. There is now a complete picture of when topics are covered in the mathematics department, and specific examples have been used in other departments. Other heads of department have identified opportunities to include numeracy in their schemes of work. The ideas in the National Numeracy Strategy are also extended into lessons in mathematics for students in Years 10 and 11. Students' numeracy skills are satisfactory when compared to national averages.

91. Students have appropriate numeracy skills in science. Higher attaining students in Year 11 have good numeracy skills and deal successfully with circuit problems. In design and technology, very accurate measurement to the nearest gram is seen when students use ingredients in food technology. The ICT department considers numeracy skills well when students are working on formulae, spreadsheets and databases. The quality of numeracy work in physical education is satisfactory and students measure and judge distances competently. Geometric shapes and perspective drawing are covered in art and design. In business education, there is precise teaching of break-even analysis. In a personal and social education lesson, Year 11 students showed good numeracy skills. They calculated interest rates on loans, and determined best value for money. They considered pension contributions and used calculators well to find percentages.

SCIENCE

The quality of provision in science is **good**.

Strengths and weaknesses

- The department has improved considerably over the last three years and standards are rising.
- After several years of underachievement students of all ages are now achieving satisfactorily.
- The head of department has very good leadership and management skills.

92. Standards in the national tests for students at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were average when compared with all schools, but very low when compared with similar schools and well below what might be expected in view of their standards in science on entry to the school in Year 7. Many improvements have been introduced but science results were still lower than those in English and mathematics. Results from this year's tests suggest that there will be a considerable improvement, particularly in the percentage of students obtaining Level 6 and above. Students now achieve satisfactorily in Years 7 to 9. GCSE results have been well below the national average for the last two years. Results fell dramatically over the three years to 2002. However, there was a significant improvement in results last year after the introduction of a modular course. For the two years up to 2003, students achieved GCSE results below what might be expected based on their attainment at the end of Year 9. Predictions for this year indicate that results will continue to improve and are likely to be just below the national average. Students in Year 11 are now achieving satisfactorily.

93. Most students have below average literacy skills, which makes it difficult for some of them to obtain the highest levels and grades. Some students have insufficient numeracy skills to cope with the demands of the subject. The provision for gifted and talented students is good. The introduction of the separate science course for the highest attaining students challenges them well and provides an excellent foundation for GCE A Level, although the time allowed for this course is short – the same as that given to the double science course. Students with SEN make satisfactory progress because the teachers and support assistants work well together. Teachers improve the students' literacy skills by the use of key words. Students' standards in ICT are satisfactory. They have opportunities to use modelling software on the computers in the department. However, the department has insufficient ancillary equipment to enable students to analyse data quickly.

94. The quality of teaching is good. The strengths in teaching include subject knowledge and planning. Teachers match their expectations to the teaching group well. Historically, students have not enjoyed science, which is the reason for recent underachievement. There are still some students in the college for which this is true. Teachers have to work very hard to keep these students motivated. Mostly teachers cope well by establishing good relationships with them. Occasionally, however, class control is not good enough and some students disrupt learning. Teachers mark students' tests and investigations well and share this test data with the students.

95. The head of department has very good leadership and management skills. She is now in her third year in the college. When she joined the college, science was the worst performing subject. Students showed little interest, results were falling dramatically, and there was a lot of disruptive behaviour. One of the first changes the new head of department introduced was to move to a modular course, which suited the below average attaining students better. Students are now more motivated because they know precisely the level or grade they are working at and what they have to do to improve.

96. The improvement since the last inspection is very good. The department now makes much more use of ICT. The quality of teaching is less variable. Assessment information is now well used to aid planning. Laboratories have been refurbished. Most students now have satisfactory attitudes.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in ICT is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good leadership and management are driving up standards.
- Good teaching is leading to good achievement.
- The brisk pace and high quality of recent developments and initiatives has led to good improvement since the last report.
- Links with home and the local community are not yet strong.
- The monitoring, evaluation and review of the teaching and learning of ICT, including the cross-curricular aspects, is not always sufficiently rigorous.
- There is not yet a coherent policy for some aspects of ICT.

Commentary

97. In the past, very few students took the GCSE examination in ICT. They usually obtained results that were above the national average, but most Year 11 students left college without a nationally accredited award. Since the new and effective head of department was appointed in September 2003, this is no longer the case. Year 11 students are taking either a full course or a short course for GCSE in less than a year, whilst Year 10 students will take the examinations at the end of two years. The students in Year 11 are highly motivated and their attainment is broadly in line with national standards. This represents good achievement, because their ICT experiences up to the end of Year 9 had been inconsistent. They had not been taught ICT in each year (although now all year groups are) and assessment systems were unsatisfactory. The pace of learning in the Year 10 classes is brisk and students are making good progress in relation to their prior attainment, because of the good teaching.

98. Students in Years 7 to 9 achieve well. They enter the college with variable, and sometimes unsatisfactory, experiences of ICT and overall standards in Year 7 are below those normally expected. The well organised assessment system shows that students make good progress and those now in Year 9 are reaching national attainment levels. This is because of high quality teaching and planning. By the time they leave Year 9 they have used ICT to combine word processing and graphics. They understand about databases, and both spreadsheets and the Internet have been used for research. They use computers to handle data, as well as for control, monitoring and modelling, and their evaluative skills have been developed well.

99. Overall, teaching and learning are good. Lesson plans have been rewritten in accordance with national guidelines and these approaches are implemented well. Students know their objectives and learn through carefully planned practical tasks that reinforce the teaching of theory. Teachers' subject knowledge is communicated well. They use the new technology effectively to make the work more accessible and interesting. For example, an interactive white board was used to stimulate good participation by students in a Year 10 lesson on the importance of validating data. Structured assessment procedures have been introduced and they support learning well.

100. Students respond positively to the good teaching and try hard. Higher attaining students benefit from the high academic expectations that permeate most Years 10 and 11 classes. Lower attaining students, and those with SEN, make good progress as a result of the effective one-to-one help that is a feature of the teaching.

101. Leadership and management are good. A dedicated and competent head of department was appointed in September 2003 and has already had a major effect on standards and achievement. The core curriculum has been successfully reviewed and beneficial changes executed. Good teaching and learning strategies, including assessment procedures, have been introduced. The

college has met the ICT targets outlined in its Technology College bid. Very good improvement has occurred since the previous inspection. All students now study the subject in a structured manner, know how they are progressing and can take GGCE examinations in Years 10 and 11. Attainment is no longer below national standards.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

Overall, there is satisfactory use of ICT as an aid to learning in other subjects, reflecting a balance of strengths and weaknesses. Some departments, such as mathematics and design and technology, use ICT very well to improve subject knowledge and understanding. Only art and English make unsatisfactory use of computers to promote learning. Access to computers has been a problem for some departments. The college is well aware of this hindrance to computer literacy and has recently opened another dedicated ICT suite. A considerable number of new computers are on order. These additions will lessen the pressure on existing resources, although other aspects of cross-curricular ICT are still not sufficiently developed. Some teachers require additional training and there is insufficient monitoring of cross-curricular teaching and learning. The college is developing a strategic plan to promote a cross-curricular approach to the development of ICT, which will ensure that due weight is given the National Curriculum, departmental needs, the implementation of initiatives and a rational policy for the acquisition of hardware and software.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well.
- Teachers are dedicated to raising standards.
- Fieldwork provision for Years 7 to 9 is limited.
- Information and communication technology is insufficiently used to enhance teaching and learning.
- Leadership of the department is good and standards are rising as a result, though problems with literacy affect the progress of some students.

Commentary

102. Teachers' assessment of students' attainment at the end of Year 9 in 2003 is in line with national expectations. Most students achieved National Curriculum level 5 or above. In the 2003 GCSE examinations the percentage of students achieving A* to C grades was similar to the national average and was an improvement on the previous year's results. Boys achieved significantly better than girls, in contrast to the national trend.

103. By the end of Year 9, standards are in line with national expectations. Students understand the interrelationship between different strands of the subject and how human actions affect the environment. Their investigative skills are developed through observation and mapping of evidence of pollution within the college area. Numeracy skills are developed well and used in the presentation of population changes and the interpretation of climatic statistics. In their study of contrasting environments students show awareness of global issues that affect less economically developed countries, such as Ghana, and acquire knowledge of different cultures. The standard of work improves significantly between Years 7 and 9, indicating good achievement based on good teaching and a desire to learn.

104. By the end of Year 11 attainment is close to the national average and achievement is good. Students research topics well and make presentations to the class. They show good understanding of how hurricanes develop and their impact on human activities. Independent learning skills were demonstrated well in a Year 10 lesson, in which the students discussed what they had discovered about the way that land has been used in Newbury.

105. The quality of teaching overall is good with some examples of very good teaching. The good subject knowledge of the staff is used effectively to guide students towards independent enquiry. Work is well planned with a range of activities aimed at developing different modes of learning. Ongoing assessment and marking of regularly set homework inform students how to improve their work. However, in some cases insufficient attention is paid in the marking to the standard of English in work presented.

106. Leadership by the newly appointed head of department is good. There is a very clear vision for development and a focus on raising standards. Schemes of work have been revised to meet the needs of all students. Cross-curricular links have been established with combined fieldwork for geography and biology students. Professional development adds significantly to the quality of the curriculum and teaching. The subject is well managed. Resources meet the requirements of the subject, but opportunities for fieldwork and visits to places of geographical interest are limited. Students receive good support after school to sort out any difficulties with their work.

107. Good improvements have been made since the last inspection. All issues raised have been fully addressed. Attainment has improved as a result of the use of a wide range of teaching and learning skills. Boys achieve just as well as girls, and their results slightly exceeded that of girls in the 2003 examinations. Students with SEN, and gifted and talented students, are catered for well. Homework is regularly set, marking indicates how to improve, and resources have been increased and improved.

History

Provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE results in 2003 were significantly below average, but have usually been above and standards have now improved.
- Teaching and learning are good because lessons are well planned and resources are used well.
- Information and communication technology resources and skills in numeracy are used well, but there is not enough focus on improving skills in literacy.
- Some students fail to meet course work deadlines, despite support lessons provided for them
- The department is well managed and led and this has helped to bring about the recent improvements in provision.

108. Standards at the end of Year 9 are average. Since many students enter Year 7 with deficiencies in literacy and historical skills this represents good achievement in Years 7 to 9. The trend at GCSE at grades A*-C has been below the national average. Results in 2003 were significantly below average, particularly for boys, and some students clearly underachieved. This was a result of staffing changes. Standards in Year 11 are now closer to the national average, although still below, because of improvements in planning, teaching and in the attitudes of students. However, some still fail to give work in on time. Boys achieve as well as girls and often contribute very well in class.

109. Attitudes to the subject are good. Students enjoy the visits organised by the department and talk about the history of the area with interest and enthusiasm. Students are achieving well because of the good teaching. Independence in learning is encouraged; teachers seek to develop their students' thinking skills; and good use is made of library and ICT resources. During the inspection,

students in Year 11 benefited from very helpful revision tasks. Lessons in the computer suite enhance the learning of all year groups. For example, Year 10 students made very good gains in learning about the growth of Manchester during the Industrial Revolution because of the very effective use of the interactive whiteboard. Support for those with SEN is good. For example, students of below average attainment in Year 9 were able to discuss with real confidence why different groups of people voted for Hitler, because of the expert way in which the lesson was structured and managed.

110. Work is carefully assessed and students have the opportunity to work in pairs and groups and to evaluate and review their own work. Each lesson provides a variety of experiences and teachers have the knowledge, enthusiasm and expertise that help students to progress well. Assessment has improved considerably and the information is used very well in matching tasks and resources to students' needs. Numeracy and ICT skills are used to promote learning and students are encouraged to produce extended pieces of written work. Very good individual projects on life during the Second World War are produced at the end of Year 9. However, weakness in written expression is still affecting the progress of some students.

111. Management and leadership are good, particularly in monitoring, planning and the use of assessment. There is a clear emphasis on promoting progression and continuity in knowledge and the development of skills. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good in raising standards in teaching and assessment and in providing high quality teaching for students with SEN. The use of computers to support learning in history is now very effective.

Religious education

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Provision is improving and students' achievement is satisfactory.
- Students' standards of attainment are below the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus.
- Assessment is not used effectively to promote students' learning.
- Responsibility for the subject has been given to a newly qualified teacher. He is making significant improvements but needs more support than he is currently given.

Commentary

112. Students arrive at John O'Gaunt having had a range of different experiences of religious education in their primary schools. Many have attained the standards expected by the West Berkshire agreed syllabus and students in Year 7 are continuing to maintain satisfactory standards. Students in other years generally now achieve satisfactorily in lessons, but their standards of attainment are below the expectations of the agreed syllabus. This is accounted for by an unsatisfactory situation in the recent past: most classes were taught by temporary, non-specialist teachers at a time when there was no subject specialist in the college to guide their work, no scheme of work for them to follow, and inadequate teaching resources.

113. Overall, teaching and learning are now satisfactory. In Years 7 to 9, a scheme of work is being produced and lessons are being planned in accordance with it. Students in Year 10 are working towards a GCSE short course qualification. Students in Year 11 are doing work from the GCSE syllabus, but will not be entered for the examination. Planning of lessons is thorough. Only one teacher of religious education is a subject specialist. He is a newly qualified teacher, who is having to produce schemes of work, and plan lessons, not only for himself but also for other teachers of the subject. Of the non-specialist teachers, one taught a very good lesson during the inspection. Students of low attainment were challenged by high but realistic expectations and they responded very well.

114. The department is committed to following the requirement of the agreed syllabus to assess students in accordance with a scale of levels similar to that used for most National Curriculum subjects. Currently, however, teachers lack familiarity and confidence with the criteria for assigning different levels to students' work.

115. Leadership and management of religious education are unsatisfactory, but the situation is beginning to improve. The head of department, in his first year of teaching, is not able yet to monitor the quality of teaching and learning within religious education. There has been unsatisfactory improvement in this subject since the last inspection report, when standards were in line with expectations.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Specialist teaching is leading to improved standards.
- Basic safety procedures in the resistant material area are not in place.
- There is some inspirational teaching in textiles.
- Specialist technician support is limited.

116. GCSE results in design and technology in 2003 were well below average. Results in 2001 and 2002 were similar to 2003. Standards seen in Year 11 are below average. This poor achievement is explained by previous non-specialist teaching and staffing difficulties. In Year 10, standards are improving and are at the national average. Satisfactory progress is being made and these students are achieving satisfactorily.

117. Standards in the present Year 9 are in line with the national expectation. This represents satisfactory achievement. At all levels of attainment students demonstrate an increasingly satisfactory understanding of the design process and exhibit improving practical skills when handling a range of tools and materials.

118. The quality of teaching and learning overall is good and especially good in textiles. Where the teaching is very good, students are highly motivated. For example, in a Year 10 textiles lesson, students had adapted hat patterns and used computer-aided design (CAD) for their logo. Threads that change colour in sunlight were used during computer aided manufacture (CAM). Good teaching was exemplified by lively commentary, the pitching of lessons at an appropriate level for the ability of students, good pace and high expectations. All this was seen in a Year 10 food technology lesson, in which the students were evaluating homemade cakes against packet mixes and a supermarket brand. They were able to compare, contrast and analyse their products, making good use of standard industrial testing methods. In the workshop the teacher's insistence on the precision handling of tools enabled Year 7 students to achieve a quality finish on their key fobs. Where teaching was less effective, basic safety procedures were not followed in the workshop, pace was slow and many students were off-task for a large part of a lesson. Good assessment procedures are in place. The students understand their targets and know what to do to improve. Relationships and mutual respect between teachers and their students are good.

119. Leadership of the subject is satisfactory. The new head of department, who had only been in post for a few months at the time of the inspection, has a clear vision for future developments. New schemes of work, which are taught by specialists, are already raising standards. The team has high aspirations for the future. Specialist technician support, particularly with the introduction of new CAD/CAM equipment, is not sufficient. There is no technician support in food technology.

120. Improvements since the last inspection are good. There is a new food technology suite, ICT is incorporated into schemes of work and the quality of teaching has improved.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

Art

The provision for art is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are high and rising; GCSE examination results in 2003 were the best in the college.
- Students achieve very well, because of the very good provision and the very good teaching, which engages students fully and enables them to learn very effectively.
- Students' attitudes are very positive.
- Leadership and management of the department are very good and committed to raising standards.
- Computer resources are unsatisfactory and restrict students' opportunities for learning.

Commentary

121. This is a successful and high performing subject that promotes high standards in the college. GCSE examination results have risen steadily in recent years and students achieve very well in art. They enter the college with below average skills, reach average standards and sometimes above by the end of Year 9 and are above average by the end of the GCSE course.

122. The higher attaining students attain high standards, showing innovative and exciting use of media and confident draughtsmanship. The overall quality of artwork produced by all students demonstrates their ability to explore and express ideas and concepts through art with individuality and technical skill. Pupils with special needs are supported well, enabling them to produce work that is close to average national standards. All students achieve very well.

123. The consistently very good teaching leads to very good learning. Teachers have a strong command of their subject, teaching it with enthusiasm and a clear commitment to challenge the technical and creative skills of students. They assess work thoroughly and ensure that students are aware of how they are doing and what they can do to improve their work. The very positive attitudes and very good behaviour of students create a positive climate for learning and ensure that lessons are productive, pleasant and creative. Relationships in lessons are positive and students work very well together in supportive and collaborative ways.

124. Leadership in the department is very good, experienced and well informed, setting high standards. The department is managed very well and has made a good improvement since the previous inspection. There is effective monitoring and very good use is made of performance data to push up standards. Students are aware of the progress they are making through both teacher assessments and their own evaluation of their work against National Curriculum and examination criteria.

125. The very experienced and knowledgeable head of department is unable to use his computer skills to enhance learning, because resources for digital art are unsatisfactory. Storage for artwork is unsatisfactory. However, the planned link with the local community arts studio offers an exciting prospect. Its 'cascade' project will involve the creative arts departments in workshops that will cascade good practice through local schools and lead to an annual exhibition and presentation.

Drama

Provision in drama is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students are achieving well because of the good provision and good teaching.
- Relationships between students and teachers are good, leading to students having positive attitudes to the subject.
- The contribution which the subject makes to the extra-curricular life of the college is strong.
- Some of the equipment and accommodation is in need of improvement.

Commentary

126. Students' attitudes to drama and their behaviour are good. They grow in maturity from the time they enter the college and are able to work well in small groups, behaving responsibly, by the end of Year 9. By the time they reach the end of Year 11, they show a good understanding of the specific skills that drama requires and are able to perform expressively alone and in groups. Attainment is in line with national expectations at the end of both Year 9 and Year 11. In recent years, in the GCSE examinations, it has been below average only once and is usually above.

127. Good teaching ensures that students achieve well. This includes students with SEN or who are gifted or talented, because teachers provide them with the right opportunities and with challenges that are well adapted to their capabilities. Students learn well because they enjoy their drama lessons: they welcome the opportunities to explore social issues and express feelings that are important to them. They show very good motivation and this helps to ensure that they take the work seriously, try hard and improve. They learn from each other as well as from the very good guidance and skilful questioning of their teacher. In a Year 8 lesson the class was asked to assume the roles of a person of high status and one of low status, such as a child or employee. They worked sensitively and co-operatively, bringing out well through their language and movements the relative strengths and weaknesses of both characters.

128. The subject is well led. Resources are good, but the accommodation is very restricted. There are plans to build a new drama studio during the coming year. The subject deserves this boost to morale. It provides very good additional enrichment to the curriculum, particularly to students' personal, social and moral development. It contributes well to language skills and its contribution to the quality of life of the whole college is strong.

Music

The provision for music is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards at GCSE are above average with increasing numbers choosing music as a subject.
- Good teaching and very good behaviour lead to very good achievement overall.
- Extra-curricular work helps to raise standards and the self-esteem of students.
- With the new accommodation now imminent, more hours of specialist teaching are needed.
- Younger students have no access to the use of computers with music software.

129. Standards are above average overall. Teacher assessment of Year 9 students showed standards below the national average in 2003, but over the last three years they have been generally close to average. Staff illness and some non-specialist supply teaching during 2003 were contributory causes of the fall. Standards seen during the inspection are above average. Students build knowledge, skills and understanding systematically, behaving very well and showing care about their learning. Confidence in performance is a strength. Students use electronic keyboards imaginatively in devising concise 'jingles', but there is no access yet to computers for students in

Years 7 to 9. An increasing number of boys and girls choose to study music in Years 10 and 11. GCSE results have been improving and have been above average for the last two years. Boys do as well as girls – a marked improvement – and music results are among the best in the college. Students in Year 11 are very positive about their choice and keen to succeed. Most are heavily involved in music beyond lessons and always do their best. Written assignments in Year 10, profiling chosen musicians, are of a high standard. Performance is strong, aided by instrumental teaching. Composition is improving, some students using good quality software with computers for this. Students with lower level literacy skills are less confident with work towards the listening paper. Students in all years who have SEN achieve as well as others, a few far exceeding expectations in performance to large audiences.

130. Teaching and learning are good – sometimes very good. Teaching commands respect in all years because it is clear and consistent, so that time for learning is maximised. Good teaching provides a good balance between practical, listening and writing activities which engage students well. Very good assessment procedures ensure that students know how to improve. Good questioning often challenges able students to think more deeply and supports the growing confidence of the less able. Homework is used very well to consolidate and extend new learning. To improve standards further, teaching should link aural and visual images of music more frequently and pay more attention to efficient keyboard fingering

131. Leadership and management are very good. The leader relates well to external agencies and takes opportunities for professional development to raise standards. He fosters a wide range of performing opportunities for developing musicians at all stages of learning, managing support staff efficiently. Very good documentation and storing of students' work enables recording and reporting of individual students' progress. The leader is succeeding in raising the profile and provision of music in the college. Improvement since the previous inspection is very good. New accommodation is nearly ready and increase in staffing is planned.

Physical education

Provision for physical education is **good**.

Strengths and weaknesses

- The positive attitudes and enthusiasm of students contribute to good teaching and learning.
- The use of assessment to track progress helps to ensure that teaching meets the needs of all students.
- There are inconsistencies in students' application of their knowledge and understanding.

Commentary

132. Standards are close to average in Year 9 and Year 11. Standards are slightly higher in Year 7 and Year 8 than elsewhere, with strengths in students' understanding, creativity and control in gymnastics. Students' knowledge and understanding are more consistently good than their ability to execute skills. A small group of Year 11 students entered the GCSE examination in 2003. Their results were close to average, with slightly fewer than average gaining the higher A*-C grades, but a significant proportion achieving grade D. Boys and girls achieve equally well.

133. Good achievement is apparent in Years 7 to 9. Progress in lessons and over time is good, because students approach lessons with enthusiasm and interest. They are expected to participate in all lessons and enjoy taking on a range of roles as performers, coaches or officials. The quality and depth of students' oral responses indicates good understanding of key principles and concepts, for example in their ability to explain shooting techniques in basketball and to exploit opponents' strengths and weaknesses in volleyball. Achievement is good in Years 10 and 11. GCSE students make steady progress. Students with SEN receive good support, contribute fully in lessons and achieve at least as well as others.

134. Teaching and learning are very good in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. The use of specialist teachers ensures good learning. Lessons are lively and interesting: they challenge students to develop and extend their skills, knowledge and understanding. Students respond with enthusiasm, are keen to demonstrate their knowledge in question and answer sessions, and willingly work with others to refine and extend their performances. In Years 10 and 11 there is more variation in teaching. Non-specialist teachers are well supported within the department, but do not always have the depth of knowledge required to extend all students fully. All lessons are well structured and teachers use assessment effectively to challenge students to improve their own work.

135. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall, with some good and very good features. The new head of department has a clear vision for the future and has already identified key parts of the curriculum as areas for attention: the Sixth Form provision, the application of policies, and further improving standards in Years 10 and 11. However, there has been insufficient time for the impact of the changes already made to be felt throughout the department.

136. Extra-curricular sports provision is good. Teachers work hard with students and give generously of their time to provide a range of competitive and recreational opportunities. Although numbers in the college are small, college teams regularly compete against other schools and there is an extensive inter-form sports competition that involves a large proportion of students. There has been satisfactory progress since the last inspection.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Citizenship

Provision is **satisfactory**.

Strengths and weaknesses

- A comprehensive scheme of work is used to direct and support teaching.
- Teaching is inconsistent in quality because some teachers lack confidence or subject training.

Commentary

137. Standards are satisfactory in Year 9. The range and quality of group work throughout the college contribute to students' ability to work effectively with others, to respect others' views and opinions and to discuss issues in a mature manner. In Years 10 and 11, standards are very variable and are generally below what might be expected of students at this level. In some lessons, brainstorming sessions indicate little understanding of key issues of finance, or the ability to think beyond their own experiences. In others, the more able students raise and develop discussion on issues such as lifestyle, expectation and implications for the economy within Europe.

138. Achievement is satisfactory throughout, with students generally contributing well to small group discussions and sharing ideas. Many are less secure in contributing to whole group sessions led by the teachers. As topics arise throughout the curriculum, students are encouraged to record coverage on their citizenship learning list. Although these opportunities vary in terms of coverage and quality of input, they do indicate that a number of different subjects are identifying this aspect of education and that students are making sound progress. The good use of questioning and a range of teaching styles enable students to think about their own responses to issues.

139. The college is committed to the provision of citizenship education and has developed a comprehensive programme. It is delivered in part through the PSHE lessons. It is not, as yet, fully supported by related themes and topics covered throughout the curriculum, nor delivered consistently within PSHE. Students have additional opportunities to develop an understanding of responsible citizenship and the democratic process, in particular through the election of the college

council. Teaching and learning are generally satisfactory. Teachers follow the scheme of work closely, which ensures satisfactory coverage. However, some teachers lack confidence in their teaching of the subject or pay only cursory attention to citizenship in their own subject areas.

140. Leadership and management are satisfactory, and the clear structure contributes to the progress made in the subject. However, not enough is done to enable students' progress to be recorded accurately and to monitor the quality of the work in lessons. Some teachers need extra support and some subjects do not, as yet, make sufficient contribution or give adequate focus to issues as they arise.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

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

The tables below show entry and performance information for courses completed in 2003.

Level 3 GCE AS level courses (Year 12)

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		College	England	College	England	College	England
Art and Design	5	100.0	80.1	60.0	23.7	48.0	29.9
Biology	3	33.3	65.2	0.0	11.1	6.7	20.6
Business Studies	11	72.7	76.4	0.0	16.3	17.3	26.2
History	3	100.0	80.7	0.0	19.5	20.0	28.6
Information Technology	12	41.7	67.0	8.3	10.9	13.3	21.4
Other Social Studies	9	33.3	69.7	0.0	16.7	10.0	24.1
English Literature	7	85.7	82.9	0.0	17.5	21.4	28.7
French	1	0.0	78.2	0.0	18.9	0.0	27.6
Geography	3	0.0	74.3	0.0	19.8	0.0	26.5
German	3	33.3	81.5	0.0	19.3	10.0	28.9
General studies	31	58.1	73.9	9.7	17.8	18.7	25.7

Level 3 GCE A Level and VCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		College	England	College	England	College	England
Art and Design	6	100.0	98.6	50.0	40.2	90.0	87.5
Business studies	6	100.0	98.7	16.7	36.8	80.0	80.1
English/English Language	14	100.0	99.4	7.1	36.3	77.1	80.9
French	1	100.0	98.8	0.0	51.5	80.0	87.6
German	3	100.0	98.4	0.0	47.9	66.7	84.8
Geography	4	100.0	98.7	50.0	44.5	80.0	84.0
History	5	100.0	99.0	40.0	44.6	88.0	84.6
Other Social Studies	4	100.0	97.4	100.0	42.7	100.0	81.8

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

English

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are rising and achievement is currently good, because of the good teaching
- Assessment procedures are excellent and are used consistently.
- There is no policy or planning to meet the needs of students across the attainment range.
- Areas for development have been correctly identified and partly addressed.

Commentary

141. Attainment in A Level English in 2003 was in line with the national average, which represented an improvement since the previous year, when it was below what is seen nationally. In 2003, a lower percentage of candidates attained grades A and B than nationally, although all students

attained an A Level pass. The predicted A Level grades for 2004, which are realistically based on a very good range of assessment information, show a considerable rise in the percentage of grades A and B with just over half of the students on course to attain these higher grades. The attainment of students currently in Year 13 is above what is seen nationally.

142. The very flexible policy for entry to Sixth Form study means that there is a very wide range of ability amongst students. Some students start the course with previous attainment in English that does not provide a firm foundation for continued study at A Level and these students make good progress by attaining a pass. Currently nearly all students in Year 13 are achieving well.

143. Overall, the quality of teaching in the Sixth Form is good, with some very good features. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge, which is used very well to boost students' confidence. Teachers make good use of teaching strategies to offer a variety of activities and learning styles. Teachers offer a high level of expectation and challenge, although it is sometimes difficult for lower attaining students to rise to this. They prepare students very well to understand the requirements of the examination and the criteria by which their work will be assessed. They support students well in planning and structuring answers. There is very good provision of additional reading in order to add depth to students' responses. Teachers make excellent use of assessment both to track the progress of each student and to offer information on what students need to do in order to improve. Students are very well informed about their own progress and very confident that they know what they need to do to reach the targets (which they have had a hand in setting). Students speak warmly of the quality of support they are offered and the generous way in which teachers are prepared to devote time to this

144. The quality of both leadership and management is good. The head of department has correctly identified areas for development and some, although not all have already been effectively addressed. There are no schemes of work for the Sixth Form, although there is a range of good quality support material for each unit of study and plans to develop these into more formal schemes. Alongside this, there is no formal policy on offering activities and tasks which meet the needs of all students across the attainment range, which means that the work is sometimes too challenging for some students. There is good emphasis, especially in the early part of the course, on the skills of critical analysis, which students can later apply to all the texts they study, and also on independent study skills. The procedures for the assessment of students' attainment and progress are excellent and are applied rigorously and consistently, giving students a clear idea of their own progress and a sense of personal responsibility for ensuring that they meet the targets set for them.

Literacy in the Sixth Form

145. The literacy skills of Sixth Form students are at least satisfactory and frequently good. In general students make good use of lively discussion in order to compare their ideas with others. They have good opportunities to carry out extended writing tasks and writing was at least adequate to meet the demands of the course in all subjects inspected. The spelling of leisure and tourism students is weak and they find it difficult to develop their ideas when writing about them, but good opportunities for extended writing lead to progress in this area. In art, Sixth Form students make extensive notes and their written work is adequate to meet the demands of the course. Their use of speaking and listening in discussion develops well.

Modern foreign languages

146. The provision for modern foreign languages was not a focus for the inspection. However, lessons were sampled in both French and German.

147. In the last two years very small numbers have sat A or AS Level examinations in French and German, so comparisons with national data are unreliable. Average point scores have been low. Two students in Year 12 follow the German AS Level course and one of them also does French. Standards in Year 12 German vary across the language skills. They are just below average overall.

Achievement is good. Coursework is thoroughly prepared. Students benefit from regular sessions with the German assistant. In French, appropriate political, moral and cultural subjects are studied. Standards are broadly average. The quality of teaching and learning in both languages is good. Teaching is well focused on individual students' needs and this leads to good achievement.

MATHEMATICS

The department offers a combination of modules in pure and discrete mathematics to students in Years 12 and 13.

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students' attainment is above average and achievement is very good as the result of very good teaching.
- Teaching and learning are particularly effective because of the enthusiasm, great experience and very good subject knowledge of the staff.
- Recruitment, though low at present, is forecast to rise significantly in the next academic year because staff have raised standards and aspirations in the present Year 11.
- The department needs to offer a broader course including statistics and applied mechanics modules, because the current courses do not cover the needs of all potential students.

Commentary

148. Results in the AS Level examinations in 2003 were near the national averages. There were no A Level candidates in 2003. Teaching groups have remained small since the Sixth Form was founded, but are forecast to rise to double figures for the next academic year. Cumulative examination statistics indicate that standards at A Level have been near the national averages, but are likely to be slightly above in the current year. There is little difference between the performance of boys and girls. The subject performs well compared to most curriculum areas.

149. The majority of students enter their course with A or B grades at GCSE; they sustain these standards and achieve very well. They find manipulation of algebraic expressions difficult at first but gradually master it during Year 12. Students are able to use their GCSE knowledge and skills confidently and effectively. This was seen in a Year 13 class, learning to solve first order differential equations by algebraic and numerical methods. The students successfully recalled previous work on proportionality and on iterative methods. Numeracy skills are generally good. Very good use was seen of ICT skills in pure mathematics homework. Students appreciate the benefits of using graphical calculators appropriately. Students also value the dedicated support of their teachers and their excellent relationships with them. They enjoy learning and using mathematics.

150. In all lessons seen teaching and learning were very good. Major factors in this are the excellent subject knowledge of the teachers, very good, encouraging relationships, wide experience and high expectations. Teachers transmit their enthusiasm readily to students. They make good use of real world data in lessons. This was seen when the Year 13 class accurately calculated time of death in an accident using Newton's Law of Cooling and in the Year 12 work scan, where critical path analysis was applied appropriately to real life problems.

151. The management of the department and the staffing have been changing almost continuously over the past two years, but the situation has now settled into a temporary steady state until the newly appointed head of department takes up post. The acting head of department is leading his dedicated team very effectively. Standards are rising up to GCSE level and this is leading to increased interest in going on to Sixth Form study. Since the last inspection standards of attainment have fallen and risen again. However, aspects such as the use of ICT and general levels of numeracy have improved. Overall improvement is therefore good.

Mathematics across the curriculum

152. Students are generally competent in mathematics and they are numerate. In the main this allows them to access the whole curriculum. There are variations in the application of number skills in other subjects, but generally teachers pay due regard to them. Examples were seen of numeracy being supported well in science, business education and technology. No instances were seen of achievement being affected by a lack of mathematical skills.

SCIENCE

Chemistry

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

Strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above national average for Year 13 students taking A Level.
- Very good teaching leads to very good learning and achievement.
- The use of a well written chemistry course helps to maintain students' interest.
- Teachers do not make best use of the modular course.

Commentary

153. Students in Year 13 are the first students that the college has had taking chemistry recently. There are three students in this group. Results from module tests already taken show that all are on target to achieve Grade B at A Level and thus reaching standards above the national average. There are also three students in Year 12 taking AS Level chemistry. These students started the course with low GCSE grades. Standards seen and internal college test results confirm that these students are below the national average. The Year 13 students have obtained results above what might be expected based on their performance at GCSE and are achieving very well. Numbers taking sciences at A Level are low at present, but projected numbers of students wanting to take post 16 chemistry next year are encouraging.

154. Year 13 students have high levels of mathematical skills, which enable them to cope well with the calculations required for chemistry. These students have above expected recall and understanding of the functional groups for a wide range of organic compounds. They are in a good position to use this knowledge well when learning about the role of organic chemistry in medicine. The department follows a chemistry course that captures the students' interests well by illustrating the industrial applications of chemistry. As part of the course requirements students must carry out a detailed investigation. The quality of the investigations is high with students demonstrating above expected self-study and experimental skills.

155. The quality of teaching is very good. One of the reasons why students learn so very well is because the teachers have excellent subject knowledge, which they demonstrate in their effective and challenging questioning techniques.

156. Students show exceptionally high levels of interest. Excellent relationships with each other and their teachers lead to a very purposeful working atmosphere in the classroom. They take pride in their work, as demonstrated by the good standard of presentation of their written work.

157. The head of department has very good leadership and management skills. She is working closely with her colleague to ensure that the courses are well planned and the examination board's requirements met. At the time of the last inspection chemistry standards were average and sometimes above. This is still the case.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

158. The college offers AS and A Level courses in information technology and a key skills course for those studying National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs). The provision was not a focus for this inspection, but work was sampled. A Level results in 2002 were in line with the national average and 2003 results were slightly better. At AS Level, 2002 results were below the national average, with similar results in 2003. Analysis carried out by the college shows that these results were better than expected from students' standards at the start of the course. The subject is growing in popularity and retention rates are high. Virtually all students are boys. One lesson was observed and teaching was good. Students were designing databases and made good progress as a result of a helpful prompt sheet and good individual tutoring to provide challenge. Standards were above average in practical work and average in theory.

HUMANITIES

History

The overall provision is **very good**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The department provides very good learning experiences that enable students to develop the full range of skills required.
- Assessment is used well and students are given very good guidance on how to improve their work.
- Students make only limited use of available ICT resources and computers were not used in the lessons observed.
- There are many opportunities for independent learning; students respond well in class but a significant minority fails to hand in work on time

Commentary

159. AS and A Level results were above the national average in 2003 and many students improved on their predicted grades. Achievement has been consistently good in recent years, although relatively few students have taken the subject. Standards in the present Year 13 are at the national average. Year 12 is a smaller group and overall standards are lower. There is no significant difference between the results of boys and girls.

160. Year 13 students achieve well because they benefit from very good teaching and are given good advice on examination requirements. They have built on their experience in Year 12, gaining in knowledge and the ability to use their knowledge to answer the demanding questions at A Level. They debate complex issues, for example the political and ideological factors affecting the establishment of the welfare state, and clearly respond very well to opportunities for independent research and group work. However, some fail to complete written work on time and attitudes overall are satisfactory rather than good. This clearly affected learning in a lesson on Hitler and the Nazi state, in which individuals were not able to benefit fully from the high quality of teaching because they had not prepared for the lesson.

161. In Year 12, students are confident in completing research tasks and in answering questions, for example about the Liberal reforms after 1906. They show a secure understanding of the background to the constitutional crisis of 1911. Students in both year groups find document-based work more difficult but they are given very good advice and guidance. The highest attaining students write high quality essays and most students plan their work well and are active rather than passive participants in lessons. Teaching is very good because it promotes this high level of participation. Assessment contributes to students' achievement and motivation because marking is very thorough and teachers provide detailed advice on how to improve. Students appreciate that teachers are really knowledgeable and enthusiastic about the subject. They learn using carefully prepared resources and good library facilities, but they have only limited access to ICT resources in class and few word-process their work.

162. The high quality of teaching and learning is a result of the very good management and development. The department has a good balance of responsibility for different aspects of the course; resources and assessment procedures are being used very well. Standards have been improved and new courses developed well: the subject has improved well since the last inspection.

Geography

Geography was not a focus for the inspection, but one lesson was sampled.

163. The quality of teaching was very good with some elements of excellence. The students were challenged to think clearly and justify their opinions. Their independent research and presentations were of a high standard.

Psychology

Provision in psychology was not a focus for the inspection. The college offers both AS and A Level courses. Results have been above average over recent years. In 2003 every student entered for A Level attained an A or B grade. The teaching seen was very good and students achieve very well on the course.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

The focus of the inspection was on art.

Art

The provision for art in the Sixth Form is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Consistently very good teaching encourages independent learning and enables students to achieve to a high standard.
- The very positive attitudes and mature behaviour of students support a positive and creative ethos in the studio; the studio is used well by students in lessons and in their free time.
- The leadership and management of the department are very good, setting high standards and ensuring that students are kept in touch with their targets and examination deadlines.
- The development of computer-aided art is restricted by the unsatisfactory resources available to the department.

Commentary

164. This is a department that consistently produces advanced level examination results amongst the highest in the college. They are currently above national averages and on a rising trend.

165. Students' achievement is very good, as a result of the very good teaching. Teachers have an excellent command of their subject and teach it with enthusiasm and confidence. Students are encouraged to develop as independent learners from the time they enter the college. They are very mature and confident learners who enjoy developing their work along individually creative lines, whilst learning from the work of other artists. They develop their ideas very well, showing high levels of skill. They are very positive and enthusiastic, often using their free study time to continue working in the studio.

166. The department benefits from very good leadership, and very good records are kept of the progress of students through the college. Performance data is analysed and used to track the department's success over time, enabling staff to adapt the curriculum where the need arises – for instance to focus on the achievements of boys. Students are able to evaluate their own work against examination criteria: they know how well they are meeting those criteria and whether or not they are meeting the target examination grades. All of this has led to rising standards and a good improvement since the previous inspection.

167. The head of department has both knowledge and industrial experience of computer aided art. However, he is unable to develop digital art and animation effectively because the computer resources are unsatisfactory. Individual students use their home computers to manipulate digital images, but there is no tradition of digital art in the department. New computers will shortly be made available to the department.

BUSINESS

The focus was on business studies and leisure and tourism.

Business studies

Provision in business studies is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students make good progress compared to their attainment on entry to the course.
- They appreciate the good teaching and one-to-one help they receive, as well as the relevance of the subject to an understanding of modern life.
- The lack of a head of department results in unsatisfactory leadership of this subject area.
- There are too few visits, visitors and links with industry.

Commentary

168. Over time, there have been variable results in the A Level Business Studies examination. This reflects the students' entry qualifications and the small numbers entered. In 2003, the results were good. Three quarters of the students attained a top grade. No one reached these standards in 2002. The current Year 13 are achieving well. Standards in Year 12 and Year 13 are broadly in line with national averages. They are making good progress towards passing the A Level paper, although relatively little work of an A or B standard was seen. The 2003 AS results were well below national averages. The work of the current Year 12 students is better, but they find the shift to an A Level approach difficult, especially as they have not studied the subject before

169. Students achieve well because of good specialist teaching and positive relationships. Students, particularly in Year 13, value the small groups and the individual attention. They benefit from well-prepared handouts and lively discussions. Business studies make a positive contribution to spiritual, moral, social and cultural education. For example, a Year 12 class was involved in a lively discussion on business ethics that centred on the activities of a number of American multi-nationals. Students appreciate that the subject teaches them about life. They make good progress as a result of precise assessment, and marking that pinpoints areas that require attention – such as finance. Lessons are well planned and subject expertise used effectively, as when a Year 13 class made good progress in understanding the requirements for a higher level pass. No unsatisfactory lessons were seen, but some aspects of teaching require further development. For example, although coursework involves students in some research and independent learning, there is too little on-going evaluation of current business activity.

170. There have been staffing difficulties and there is currently no head of department. This is unsatisfactory. Expert evaluation of business education teaching and learning does not take place. The school does not offer a comprehensive business education for 14-19 year olds, which would enable Sixth Formers to have benefited from prior learning. There is no reference to enterprise education or work-related learning and GCSE courses are not offered. Students do not extend knowledge through activities such as Young Enterprise, the operation of a school bank or involvement in national events. There are missed opportunities to promote independent learning, including the extensive use of ICT and a focus on widespread reading. Business education is not enhanced by a range of videos, visits and visitors or links with the local community. A newly qualified teacher lacks consistent support to develop students' professional skills in business education. No comment can be made on improvement since the previous Ofsted report as the subject was not inspected.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

The focus was on leisure and tourism.

Leisure and tourism

The course leading to the intermediate General National Vocational Qualification is run over two years. Two of the five who began the course remain in Year 13. All five who began in Year 12 remain. Three lessons were observed and portfolios of work examined.

Provision for leisure and tourism is **good**.

Strengths and weaknesses

- Good links with businesses in the tourism industry enhance learning.
- No Year 12 student can attend all lessons because of unsatisfactory timetabling; this adversely affects the progress of all.
- Those who complete the course acquire skills which will serve them well in the work place.
- The drop-out rate has been high.

Commentary

171. The 2003 examination results of the four students who completed the course were slightly above the national average. However, a further five students left without completing the course.

172. Standards of the two Year 13 students are above average. One is well on course to gain a distinction and the other a merit. Both carried out a high quality risk analysis when organising an event for their peers. Students join the course with relatively low prior attainment and weak writing skills. Achievement is good. Their portfolios show a steady progress in understanding factors that affect the leisure industry, and in their ability to discuss, analyse, distil and present information and

evaluate results. Personal confidence and vocabulary increase as students chair meetings and deal with the public. Standards in Year 12 are broadly average and achievement is satisfactory. Unsatisfactory timetabling for the current Year 12 slows progress, as no student can attend all lessons; attendance in the worst case is at fewer than half the lessons. The teacher spends some time in each Year 12 lesson covering important points from the previous session. The timetable is being amended next year to ensure that this problem is resolved.

173. Teaching and learning are good overall. The teacher prepares lessons and tasks thoughtfully. Lesson objectives are clear and are met. Students are provided with detailed instructions for assignments and very clear guidelines about how they will be assessed. Good questioning and prompting move students to greater understanding. Students' needs are well known and relationships are very good; as a result students gain confidence to participate and make progress.

174. A single teacher runs the course well. She has forged good contacts with local leisure businesses which offer work experience, opportunities to encounter the public and visiting speakers. These enrich learning significantly. However, there are no links with other Sixth Form vocational courses. Opportunities for the teacher to share ideas and moderate standards are limited to informal contact with colleagues in other schools and a few examination board-training sessions. Accommodation is unsatisfactory in that the subject has no base and teaching is rarely in a room with computers, although access is often near. Resources are adequate, though textbooks are dated.

175. The subject was not offered at the time of the last inspection.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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