

INSPECTION REPORT

BOTTISHAM VILLAGE COLLEGE

Bottisham, Cambridge

LEA area: Cambridgeshire

Unique reference number: 110860

Headteacher: Mr P Hains

Lead inspector: Denis Pittman

Dates of inspection: 14th - 17th June 2004

Inspection number: 266012

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive
School category: Community
Age range of pupils: 11 - 16
Gender of pupils: Mixed
Number on roll: 1,030

School address: Lode Road
Bottisham
Cambridge
Cambridgeshire

Postcode: CB5 9DL

Telephone number: (01223) 811 250
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Appropriate authority: The governing body
Name of chair of governors: Mr Peter Lee OBE

Date of previous inspection: 26th January 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Bottisham Village College is a mixed, average-sized college for pupils aged 11-16. It is situated in a residential village north of Cambridge. There are 1,030 pupils on roll (boys 516, girls 514). The gender mix is balanced across the college but there are noticeably more boys in Years 7 and 8. There is very little movement of pupils into or away from the college other than at the usual times. Pupils come from contrasting socio-economic backgrounds but they are, overall, above average. There is a very low number of pupils from a minority ethnic background or pupils having English as a second language. The number of pupils on the special educational needs register is below average as is the number of pupils eligible for free school meals. The number of pupils with a statement of special educational need is average. Overall, standards of attainment on entry are above average. The college successfully acquired 'Beacon School' status in September 2000 and has successfully submitted a bid for specialist status in humanities. There is extensive use of the college facilities by the community (2000 adult pupils on 250 courses each year).

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
16976	Denis Pittman	Lead inspector	
13786	Susan Walsh	Lay inspector	
12499	Marie Durkin	Team inspector	English as an additional language English
17923	Mike Shaw	Team inspector	Mathematics
17404	Judith Tolley	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
21866	David Tracey	Team inspector	Science
27351	Mike Stanton	Team inspector	Information and communication technology
4607	David Ward	Team inspector	Design and technology
7926	James Bowden	Team inspector	Special educational needs Physical education
30545	David Castell	Team inspector	Geography
10895	David Wasp	Team inspector	Citizenship History
22501	Sue Jones	Team inspector	Music
31129	Jeff Pickering	Team inspector	Art and design
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Bottisham Village College is a very good college with excellent features. **It provides a very good quality of education and gives very good value for money.** The prevailing ethos is caring and supportive, yet is also based upon high expectations of performance. The leadership of the warden is very good - his vision and ambition have created a successful and innovative learning environment. Overall standards achieved are well above average when compared with national figures at the end of Years 9 and 11. Pupils achieve very well as the result of very good teaching. Pupils' personal development is significantly enhanced by the very good quality of the support and guidance they receive. The staff show a strong commitment to shared objectives of continuing improvement. Relationships are very good; this is reflected in the high standards of behaviour of pupils and their developing maturity.

THE COLLEGE'S MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES ARE:

- Results in tests and examinations are well above national averages and pupils' overall achievement is very good.
- The leadership and management of the college are very good. A climate of innovation, challenge, support and improvement has been successfully created.
- The overall quality of teaching is very good; this promotes very effective learning amongst pupils.
- Pastoral care is very strong and promotes very positive relationships within the college. The pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning are very good.
- The overall curriculum provision is very good, being excellent in history.
- Information and communication technology (ICT) is used well in some areas of the curriculum but lacks consistency of application in some subjects.

The college has made good improvement since the last inspection. In terms of its academic performance, the national measures of progress (value added) show a pattern of sustained improvement. The quality of teaching continues to improve and is now a strength of the college. There are two issues from the last inspection that the college has failed to address sufficiently: ICT across the curriculum and compliance with daily worship.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Performance compared with:		all schools			similar schools
		2001	2002	2003	2003
Year 11	GCSE/GNVQ examinations	A	B	A	A

*Key: A - well above average; B - above average; C - average; D - below average; E - well below average.
For Year 11, similar schools are those whose pupils attained similarly at the end of Year 9.*

Overall achievement is very good. Standards are broadly above average on entry to the college, although there is the full spectrum of ability. Examination test results over time show continuing high standards and an improving trend. The college's performance in National Curriculum tests and examinations at the end of Years 9 and 11 is significantly better than those of similar schools. In most subjects, standards in GCSE examinations were above average. However, results in drama and graphics were lower than would be expected in 2003. Standards seen in lessons in Years 7 to 9 are well above average; in Years 10 and 11, they are also well above average. Overall achievement in lessons is very good. There is no

significant difference in the achievement of boys and girls in Years 7 to 9 but girls generally perform better in Years 10 and 11. All groups of pupils in the college make very good progress.

Pupils' personal development is very good as a result of the very good provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural education. Relationships between each other and with staff are very good. Behaviour and attitudes are very good; exclusion rates are low. Pupils' enthusiasm for their work and their mature attitudes promote very good learning and achievement. Attendance rates are satisfactory.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the college is very good. The college is very effective in identifying the individual needs of pupils. The overall quality of teaching is very good and helps promote high standards of achievement. Teaching in mathematics, science, art and design, history, geography and citizenship is of a very good standard. The college has successfully created an ethos for learning based upon high expectations and positive working relationships. The active encouragement of teachers helps motivate pupils and leads to high productivity. Pupils are keen and interested learners. Assessment procedures are effective in collating information but are not sufficiently rigorous for monitoring progress in some subjects in Years 7 to 9.

Overall, the college provides pupils with a very good curriculum. The positive and supportive ethos evident in all aspects of the college's life ensures that pupils emerge as mature and enriched young adults when they leave the college. The provision for extra-curricular activities is very good.

The college has a very effective pastoral system. Pupils are very well supported and any underachievement is quickly identified. Very good care, support and guidance contribute significantly to pupils making significant gains in academic achievement and personal development. The college is very popular and is significantly oversubscribed; it enjoys a very good reputation in its community. The college has very good links with parents.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The college is very effectively led and managed. The leadership of the warden is very good. He is ably supported by a strong team of senior and middle managers, who show very good leadership. The overall governance of the college is very good. Governors are fully involved in the leadership and strategic planning of the college. They are supportive and bring a good range of experience to the governance of the college. The financial management of the college is excellent.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE COLLEGE

The college works very effectively with parents to support learning. Parents feel a very strong sense of partnership based on mutual trust; they have great confidence in the college. They are very satisfied with almost all aspects of its work. Parents are provided with a good range of information about the activities of the college. Pupils enjoy being at the college. They feel that they are taught very well and they are very helpfully supported in their academic and personal development.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

THE THINGS THE COLLEGE SHOULD DO TO IMPROVE ARE:

- Ensure greater consistency in the use of assessment procedures and use of data.
- Continue the development of the use of ICT across the curriculum.
- Monitor attendance more rigorously.

AND MEET STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS BY:

- Making appropriate provision for a daily act of worship.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

Overall, standards at the end of Year 9 and Year 11 are **well above average**. Examination and test results over time show continuing high performance and an improving trend. The overall achievement of pupils is **very good**. Achievement in Years 7 to 9 and in Years 10 and 11 is very good. There is no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls at the end of Year 9 but girls perform relatively better in GCSE examinations. All groups continue to make very good progress. Standards in the core subjects (English, mathematics and science) are well above average.

MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- Overall, the results of examinations and tests are well above average.
- Standards in the core subjects (English, mathematics and science) are consistently well above average.
- Results at the end of Year 9 and Year 11 are well above the national average when compared with those in similar colleges or schools.
- Achievement in Years 9 and 11, as seen in lessons, is very good. The value added in each key stage is high, given pupils' attainment on entry.
- Overall, standards have continued to improve since the last inspection.

COMMENTARY

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	35.9 (33.2)	33.4 (33.3)
mathematics	37.6 (38.1)	35.4 (34.7)
science	36.1 (37.2)	33.6 (33.3)

There were 209 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

1. In the 2003 National Curriculum tests taken at the end of Year 9, the combined results were well above the national average. In the individual subjects (English, mathematics and science), standards were well above average. Overall, standards in these subjects were well above those of similar colleges. The overall trend in test performances is above the national picture; targets were exceeded. At the end of Year 9, achievement in lessons in the core subjects reflects the very good test results. In general, pupils achieve very well and make significant progress in their studies.

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

	College results	National results
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	67 (57)	52 (50)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	93 (94)	91 (91)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	99 (99)	96 (96)

Average point score per pupil (best 8 subjects)	39.4 (38.1)	34.7 (34.8)
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There were 179 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

- Overall, performance in GCSE 2003 examinations was well above the national average. The trend of improvement was marginally below the national picture - this was because of the dip in performance in 2002. This position has been retrieved in 2003; standards in comparison with similar schools or colleges were well above average. Targets for these examinations were mostly achieved. Standards in English, mathematics and science in the GCSE examinations were well above national averages. In most other subjects, standards are above average, although they were below average in drama and graphics in 2003.
- All Years 10 and 11 pupils with special educational needs are entered for a range of GCSE examinations and some also opt to take a number of vocational subjects. In the 2003 GCSE examinations, all pupils on the college's list of those with special educational needs attained at least one A* to G grade pass, all but one attained four or more A* to G grade passes, five attained five or more A* to D grade passes and two attained five or more A* to C grade passes.

STANDARDS SEEN DURING THE INSPECTION

- In Years 7 to 9, overall standards are **well above average**. In particular they are well above average in English, mathematics, science, geography, history and modern foreign languages. Standards seen during lessons and in samples of pupils' work generally reflect well above average standards of performance. Achievement by the end of Year 9 is very good because the teaching is very good. Teachers have high expectations which encourage pupils to achieve very well. However, achievement is only satisfactory in religious education. Achievement in the basic skills of literacy and numeracy is very good.
- In Years 10 and 11, standards generally continue to be well above average. The positive effect of a focus on the quality of learning, including very well managed departments and very good teaching, can be clearly seen in the high standards achieved. Standards in the core course for religious education are average because there is not enough good teaching and learning. Overall, achievement in Years 10 and 11 is very good.
- Pupils with special educational needs achieve very well across all years and in most subjects. Gifted and talented pupils are appropriately challenged by the work in most lessons and usually reach their potential. In general, the achievement of all pupils, irrespective of their ethnic background or innate ability, is very good.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES, VALUES AND OTHER PERSONAL QUALITIES

Attendance rates are **satisfactory**. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are **very good** and exclusion rates are low. Personal development is **very good**. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils is very good.

MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- Pupils' positive attitudes and their commitment to their college work support high achievement.
- Pupils behave very well in lessons and around college.
- Pupils react very well to responsibility and take a very active part in the life of the college.

COMMENTARY

- Attendance rates are satisfactory. They are very similar to the national average and have risen in line with the national average. Pupils with poor attendance are quickly identified and rigorously monitored. However, the college is less effective at identifying pupils who quietly miss the odd day. This has an adverse effect on attendance rates. A significant number of pupils are involved in theatre and television productions and some miss a significant amount of work in college. Punctuality is satisfactory. Occasionally pupils who are late can disturb the start of lessons. The college is working to address this issue and is monitoring lateness in the morning and to lessons more effectively than before.
- Pupils are willing to work hard and are determined to do well. Their very positive attitudes towards their college work are a significant factor in their very good achievement. Pupils are very committed to both academic study and supporting their college, of which they are proud. Pupils are involved in many activities, including drama productions and sporting and musical activities. Behaviour in lessons and around college is very good. Pupils act sensibly; they have very good manners and treat visitors, staff and each other well. Pupils are very keen to take on responsibility: they talk enthusiastically about college and subject prefectship, the role of the peer mentor and other roles such as supervising the sports day for primary school children. Relationships between pupils and between pupils and staff are very good. This, together with the wide range of opportunities for developing a sense of responsibility, results in pupils who are articulate, mature and confident.
- The college's policies regarding behaviour work very well but the college is not complacent. The policy is being enhanced to ensure continuity of approach from primary school to secondary college. Fixed-term exclusion rates are low and permanent exclusions are rare. The attitudes and behaviour of pupils have improved from the previous inspection from good to very good. The peer mentoring system whereby older pupils are trained to help and support younger pupils with difficulties is highly valued by pupils of all ages. As well as providing good support to younger pupils, the promotion of the system makes a considerable contribution to the personal development of older pupils. Although a small number of parents were concerned about bullying issues which had not always been resolved to their satisfaction, pupils felt that bullying was tackled well. Peer mentors report that bullying is usually restricted to fallings-out and name-calling amongst younger pupils. The warden is very willing to become involved if necessary and, on rare occasions, pupils have been excluded for bullying. Evidence indicates that the college takes all incidents of bullying seriously and has been proactive in identifying bullying through the use of a questionnaire and peer mentors.
- In normal lessons, the attitudes and behaviour of pupils with special educational needs are generally no different to those of others. Where teaching assistants are present to support pupils with special educational needs this is accepted well by all, other pupils often taking advantage of their presence and seek extra help themselves. The attitudes and behaviour of those pupils who attend withdrawal lessons in the learning support department are very good, resulting in a calm and purposeful learning atmosphere. Year

10 pupils with statements of special educational need are particularly appreciative of the help, support and guidance they receive from the learning support department.

11. The college promotes the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very well. The moral, social and cultural development of the pupils is very good. The humanities make a very good contribution to the spiritual understanding and development of the pupils through a planned programme. In history, for example, pupils study the Holocaust and the moral dilemmas faced by people and, by studying the life of Hitler, pupils deal with moral questions of whether his actions can be excused because of his unhappy childhood. In religious education, pupils learn about Puja, a Hindu ceremony, and what each of the actions means and their spiritual significance to everyday life. In citizenship, pupils debate the moral issues of abortion, euthanasia, the exploitation of underdeveloped countries and whether children's rights are more important than those of their parents. Pupils are expected to think through their own views as well as show understanding of the views of others. The provision for spiritual development has improved since the last inspection. There is a whole-college policy which ensures that all departments take account of the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development in their planning; however, in many subjects, this remains in the planning and is not evident in the day-to-day lessons. Some subjects like religious education, history, and music make significant contributions to pupils' spiritual development; opportunities are missed in other subjects to develop a sense of curiosity where answers are not readily found.
12. Parents are very positive in their view that staff encourage pupils to become mature and independent. Most pupils enjoy college, feel valued, have good relationships with staff and each other, and respond with growing confidence in lessons. They are fully involved in the life of the college, participating in the wide-ranging extra curricular activities offered, fundraising and supporting the development of some of the exquisite gardens which they not only helped to design but also continue to maintain with pride. The pupils' council is an active and confident group which contributes positively to college life, dealing with issues such as improving the toilets or the mentoring of younger pupils both in Bottisham College and the feeder primary schools. The system of applying for the positions of head boy and girl, going through a rigorous process and interview, has widened the range of opportunities for pupils.
13. Pupils' social and moral development is very good. There is a strong moral code that enables the pupils to learn how to distinguish right from wrong and which permeates the whole life of the college. Expectations of behaviour are high and fully accepted by most pupils but a small minority disrupt progress in some lessons. The provision for the moral development of pupils is good with significant strengths. Teachers and some Year 11 pupils provide good role models for other pupils. Pupils respect and value them. Many subjects effectively use group work to develop pupils' social skills. Personal and social education and citizenship also effectively promote pupils' collaboration through discussion in groups. Physical education makes a significant contribution to the development of social skills through its emphasis on teamwork and working together for a common goal.
14. The personal and social education curriculum makes a significant contribution to pupils' moral development by recognising the importance of discussion and evaluation of a variety of moral and personal issues. It reinforces the college's code of conduct and involves pupils in re-evaluating their own personal values. The positive ethos of the college celebrates the achievement of all and spurs pupils on to aim as high as they can. Success, no matter how small, is recognised and praised, so that self-esteem is boosted

and pupils become increasingly motivated to do well. Pupils learn to be considerate of the needs of others and agree that there is hardly any bullying and no racial tension in the college community and that any incident is dealt with swiftly.

15. Through lessons in citizenship, through assemblies and through the 'Behaviour Programme', pupils are encouraged to think carefully about global issues and to come to their own informed opinions about right and wrong. On a simple level, they accept and understand the basic disciplinary rules in college which form the basis of their moral code. Some pupils show, through their perceptive comments on issues such as abortion, euthanasia, the rain forest and Fair Trade and the influence of the media, for example, that they are beginning to grasp the wider implications of morality.
16. Provision for the cultural development of pupils is very good; however, their understanding of the multicultural dimension of the wider community is less developed except in religious education, which makes a good contribution through learning from religion and the investigation of a variety of religions. Music schemes of work include music from Indian and Caribbean cultures. Foods from a variety of different cultures are considered in food technology. Trips and visits include an annual visit to Spain and France for art and languages and a variety of different places of worship in UK cities. Other opportunities for pupils to become aware of cultures other than their own include Eid and Ramadan and other religious events.

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence	
School data	7.3
National data	7.2

Unauthorised absence	
School data	0.8
National data	1.1

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

Exclusions

Ethnic background of pupils

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British
White – Irish
White – any other White background

Exclusions in the last school year

Number of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
949	47	0
5	0	0
17	0	0

Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	7	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	3	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	7	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	1	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	0	1	0
Black or Black British – African	1	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	1	0	0
Chinese	4	0	0
Any other ethnic group	4	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	7	0	0

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

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The overall quality of education provided by the college is **very good**. Generally, pupils achieve very well because of the very good teaching. The quality of teaching does not vary between successive key stages. The commitment to learning, which is shown by the pupils' very positive attitudes to work, is conducive to high standards. The extra-curricular and enrichment opportunities provided are very good. Support and guidance for pupils are very good.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

The overall quality of teaching is **very good** and promotes high standards of achievement. The level of learning is **very good**. Pupils have very positive attitudes to learning and are very keen and interested in their studies. Assessment procedures are good.

MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- Teachers' very effective planning and subject knowledge help to promote and develop pupils' skills very well.
- The active encouragement of teachers helps motivate pupils and leads to high productivity.
- Teaching methods are very effectively geared to pupils' different levels of ability.
- The homework policy is effectively implemented in most departments; the practice promotes achievement.
- Assessment systems in some subjects do not provide pupils with sufficient guidance on how to improve.

COMMENTARY

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 108 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
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7 (6.5%)	37 (34.3%)	36 (33.3%)	26 (24.1%)	1 (0.9%)	1 (0.9%)	0 (0%)
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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.

17. The overall quality of teaching and learning is very good, with some examples of excellent teaching. The quality of teaching in Years 7 to 9 is very good, as it is in Year 10; no taught lessons were seen in Year 11 because of examinations. There was a very small amount of unsatisfactory teaching, due mainly to unsatisfactory control.
18. A particular strength is the consistency of the quality of teaching across most subjects. Teachers are enthusiastic and committed to the pupils and the college. They are keen to improve their teaching and support one another well. The college has a comprehensive programme for teachers' professional development and training. Members of the leadership team support other teams of teachers. The college has set clear aims for improvement in teaching and learning.
19. Teachers have secure subject knowledge and expertise and show enjoyment of their subject, which is often enthusiastically shared with their pupils. In the modern foreign language department, teachers have a very good command of the languages they teach and in the majority of lessons, they use the language being learned to conduct activities effectively. Pupils, therefore, benefit from very good role models and their listening skills are very well developed. In science, teachers have a very secure command of their subject areas and their clear explanations of scientific concepts and theories help improve pupils' learning considerably. As a result, interest and motivation are high and time spent in lessons is very productive. However, in some religious education lessons, teachers who are less experienced and non-specialist sometimes find the teaching of deeper levels of the religious concepts challenging. In the best lessons, teachers set suitably challenging tasks. Another strength of the teaching is the teachers' use of discussion and activities, enabling pupils to express their own views and ideas. In history lessons, there is a strong emphasis on debate and discussion. The pupils discuss with considerable enthusiasm and maturity and show very positive attitudes in all lessons. In most other subjects, questioning is skilfully used, often aided with good quality materials, to extend pupils' knowledge and understanding of issues and events.
20. The very good teaching evident in a number of lessons enables and consolidates pupils' learning. Explanations are clear and questioning is effective in moving pupils' learning forward and helping them to recall previous learning. In music lessons, questioning is used effectively to check pupils' knowledge and understanding and to encourage them to think for themselves. Strategies for helping pupils to listen to music and understand the structure of a piece of music are good. Starter activities promote stimulating beginnings to the lessons. In general, learning is particularly good when teachers encourage pupils to use a style that suits them best.

Example of outstanding practice

MOTIVATING LOWER-ATTAINING PUPILS TO ENJOY LITERATURE.

The teacher inspired pupils to produce excellent work because of his outstanding knowledge, subject enthusiasm and careful planning. The pupils and the teacher shared their enjoyment of the lesson in an atmosphere of mutual respect, enthusiasm and very high expectations. Pupils were encouraged to strive for the best, to recognise and understand their own abilities and to have a high regard for human achievements. As a result, their work was diverse, celebratory and moving.

21. Pupils' learning benefits from an effective homework policy, which is usually applied consistently and rigorously by teachers. This means that homework forms continuous and regular revision, which consolidates learning and develops in pupils a high capability for independent work. Assignments are regularly and thoroughly marked to provide quality feedback. This strategy is an important factor in the pupils' high achievement. Pupils usually respond positively, taking pride in written work, which then forms an accurate record for later revision.
22. An extensive range of visits and visitors to the college motivates pupils and promotes their learning. The involvement of a range of speakers was clearly evident in the successful Year 9 PSHE day that took place during the inspection. The evidence from a scrutiny of pupils' work over a period of time confirms the consistency of the very good teaching they receive.
23. Pupils are keen to achieve well. They make clear advances in their knowledge, skills and understanding. Their intellectual, physical and creative efforts are developing very well. In the best lessons, learning objectives are clearly set at the outset and returned to at the end of the lesson. Pupils also assess each other's work well and so learn effectively from each other. Most lessons move at a good pace that maintains pupils' attention.

EXAMPLE OF OUTSTANDING PRACTICE

PROVIDING APPROPRIATE CHALLENGE FOR GIFTED AND TALENTED PUPILS.

High-achieving pupils in Year 10 were taking a full A-level in mathematics. They will complete this course by the end of Year 11 (as well as taking GCSE). A lesson towards the 'Pure 2' module began with a brief discussion of the way knowledge varied from subject to subject. The teacher described the work of Russell and Whitehead. Pupils then considered the concept of parallel lines on a spherical surface. Through discussion, they appreciated that the definition of a straight line as being the shortest distance between two points had the consequence that they had to revise their thinking. In passing, they realised why air routes may, at first glance, appear illogical, e.g. a flight from the UK to Los Angeles over the North Pole. Continuing the consideration of the way mathematics is built from axioms, pupils were then fascinated by the work of Gödel, considering the statement 'this statement is false'. Faces told all. One pupil explored the concept that the words did not form a valid statement. Pupils were then intrigued by the concept that a statement might be neither true nor false.

The next challenge was to consider whether 0.9 recurring was the same as 1 . This led back to the syllabus as pupils very rapidly derived, without input from the teacher, a formula for the sum of a geometric sequence.

Throughout this rapidly moving lesson, the teacher's wonder at the intrigue of his subject was infectious.

24. Where pupils with special educational needs are taught in normal lessons, teachers are well aware of their needs. They have copies of pupils' individual education plans (IEPs) as well as a very useful IEP subject target summary document. Targets in IEPs are discrete and sharp, thus helping teachers plan their work to meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs.
25. Where observed, teacher assistants provided effective support in lessons for pupils with special educational needs. In an English lesson, for example, a teacher assistant enabled a previously absent pupil to catch up with missed work, thus ensuring all were at the same stage of work by the end of the lesson. In mathematics lessons, teacher assistants were very proactive and worked very closely with teachers, and in science lessons, very good quality support improved the level of pupils' progress. In a religious education lesson, the teacher assistants were effective in providing literacy support for younger pupils. In withdrawal lessons in the learning support department, very good

quality support resulted in a very positive learning atmosphere in which pupils with special educational needs achieved very well.

26. The overall effectiveness of assessment procedures is good. However, there is some inconsistency of practice within departments. Work is regularly marked but the quality of information this gives to pupils varies. In some subjects, such as history, pupils are given a very clear picture of the progress they are making and provided with very detailed information on the next steps for improvement. In modern foreign languages, assessment information is not always used effectively to ensure that lower-attaining pupils can succeed in reading and listening tasks and this reduces, rather than increases, their confidence. In other subjects, pupils do not know the current level of their work. In physical education, assessment is not accurate because teachers do not cross-check the grades they give. The newly-instituted 'review day' helps pupils and their parents gain very clear information on the progress they are making and how to make further improvements. Target setting is helping to raise standards of achievement. Form tutors and heads of year are actively involved in monitoring the progress made by pupils. Science is an example of a subject that uses the information gained from assessing pupils to evaluate the quality of its work but this practice is not yet uniform.
27. The college carefully analyses data from a number of sources. However, not all staff are as yet fully able to interpret this data, especially when different data presents a conflicting picture. A good range of assessment tests is used to identify pupils with special educational needs and to enable the tracking of these pupils over time. However, the analysis of the data for pupils at the end of Year 9 is not sufficiently well developed, particularly in relation to how well they are attaining in the national tests.
28. Teaching and learning have continued to improve since the previous inspection. These improvements are largely due to the way the college has focused on pupils' learning and the monitoring of outcomes. Staff training has been directed towards encouraging pupils to think about how they learn and to be fully involved in their learning. The college has appropriately identified assessment as an area for development in the next two years. A group of teachers is developing this work. They have correctly recognised that there is much good practice in areas of the college and that the way forward is by further dissemination of this good practice.

THE CURRICULUM

The curriculum provision is **very good**; it is broad and balanced and meets the needs and aspirations of all pupils very well. Courses are very well planned to ensure continuity and progression. As a result, pupils achieve well. Statutory requirements are fully met, with the exception of the requirement for a daily collective act of worship.

MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- The curriculum meets the needs and aspirations of all pupils very well and enables them to achieve very well.
- Links with the wider community are very good, significantly enrich the taught curriculum and play a valuable part in pupils' personal development.
- Very good support for learning outside the college day and very good extra-curricular provision significantly enhance the taught curriculum.

- The curriculum is regularly and rigorously evaluated and innovation is carefully managed to meet changing requirements both at whole-college and subject levels.

COMMENTARY

29. In Years 7 to 9, in addition to the core curriculum, pupils take drama, and the majority take a second modern foreign language, either German or Spanish, as well as French. Pupils for whom this is not appropriate continue with French and receive extra help with mathematics and English. The timetabling arrangements are such that it is possible to group pupils according to their capabilities in individual subjects and to meet and respond to their needs in Years 8 and 9 so that they can achieve their potential. Very effective links with primary feeder schools ensure continuity and progression and a smooth transition from Years 6 to 7.
30. In Years 10 and 11, pupils are able to choose from a wide range of courses very well suited to meet a variety of needs and aspirations. Humanities subjects (history, geography, religious education and citizenship) are interlinked without losing their discrete nature in order to provide a connected range of experiences. In Years 10 and 11, the college caters very well for the needs and aspirations of its pupils through the provision of both GCSE and specialist vocational courses and through links with further education colleges; however, at present vocational GCSE courses are limited to Health and Social Care and ICT. In addition, talented mathematicians have the opportunity of studying to A-level in Years 10 and 11. Imaginative use of timetabling enables all pupils to study two arts subjects, two humanities, two technical subjects or two languages to GCSE. In addition, pupils are able to opt for Study Support to enhance their learning in other subjects. Through well-established links with further education colleges, the college makes very good alternative curriculum provision for those pupils for whom GCSE courses are not appropriate, for example courses in gardening, horticulture, catering and applied ICT and the Youth Award. The curriculum is regularly and rigorously evaluated and innovation is carefully managed to meet changing requirements both at whole-college and subject level. For example, at present some pupils attending college for the catering course miss a mathematics lesson; the college is aware of this and appropriate action is being taken to ensure that attendance at the course does not prejudice the pupils' success in mathematics in the future.
31. Overall, provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good. Pupils with special educational needs have full and equal access to the curriculum and are fully involved in the life of the college. Alongside the traditional range of GCSE courses on offer, the college also offers a range of vocational courses to meet the full ability range of pupils in Years 10 and 11. The very strong ethos of inclusion and support for pupils with special educational needs has a positive impact on the social development and learning experience of these pupils as well as on that of all other pupils in the college. Formal extra-curricular homework clubs run by teachers mean that pupils with special educational needs have the opportunity to ask for and receive extra subject and specific support and guidance during the week.
32. Provision for pupils with special educational needs across subjects is good overall and in mathematics and science it is very good. Departments are kept fully informed of special educational needs as a result of regular liaison with the special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCo) and department-based teacher assistants. The college has recently

taken steps to formally identify gifted and talented pupils and a list of these pupils has been drawn up. Analysis of the progress these pupils make is not yet fully established.

33. Provision for personal, social and health education is good. There is a strong focus on health education, and drugs education is well addressed. The teaching of personal and social education is satisfactory. Form tutors, who deliver the programme, are supplied with detailed information but they lack the necessary expertise and this can result in a lack of rigour. When teaching does not challenge pupils, they can lose interest. In order to redress this weakness, each year group experiences a special day where experts, including outside speakers and drama performers, deliver lessons. During the inspection, a good quality sex education day was observed, with an appropriate concentration on responsible behaviour. However, there was insufficient time to fully address some important aspects of this topic. Although sex education is revisited later, older pupils report that some form tutors sometimes have difficulty in addressing sensitive issues.
34. There is very good support for learning outside the college day; most subjects provide opportunities for pupils to get extra help outside the college day. Summer schools, Easter revision classes and homework clubs are available to all pupils. Expertise from within and outside college is used very well to enrich the curriculum both in terms of taught courses and through community projects the college is involved in. The taught curriculum is significantly enhanced by the community involvement of the school. The college plays a central and important role in the life of the wider community; a large number of adults attend courses at the college both during and outside the college day. Pupils' personal development is significantly enriched through opportunities to work alongside adults on a regular basis - for example, in the 'Turning Red Lights Green' project where pupils from Years 10 and 11 work alongside adults in their NVQ gardening course.
35. Extra-curricular provision is very good; the college provides a very good range of sports, musical activities, clubs, drama productions and other activities, mainly at lunchtime in order that the majority of pupils are able to participate, and after college. Both parents and pupils appreciate the time teachers give to providing these activities and their enthusiasm which passes on to pupils. The taught curriculum is further enhanced by opportunities to take part in geography fieldwork, the maths and reading challenges, public speaking competitions and visits in science, history and religious education as well as trips to the theatre. Well-established exchanges to France and Germany as well as e-mail links with France and Spain further enrich the taught curriculum. There is a good level of participation in extra-curricular activities. Pupils are also given opportunities to take responsibility and to play a significant role in the day-to-day running of the college through Year and School Councils and the Peer Mentoring arrangements as well as the opportunity to take part in the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme.
36. Sporting provision is good overall. All pupils in Years 7 to 9 have at least two formal timetabled lessons per week of compulsory physical education. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 have one timetabled lesson per week. Further opportunities are provided through a very good range of extra-curricular provision throughout the year and the opportunity for older pupils to opt for the GCSE course. The department of physical education is involved in the local schools' sports co-ordinator (SSCo) scheme but the development of the Physical Education, School Sport and Club Links (PESSCL) strategy is at an early stage. However, there are established links with local community sporting organisations that are of benefit to pupils.

37. The college has made very good progress since the last inspection. It has maintained and developed the broad and balanced curriculum provision to better meet the needs of pupils. Statutory requirements for the delivery of ICT across the curriculum are now met. The time allocated to non-GCSE religious education has been increased and is now satisfactory. The college has made good progress in developing the vocational dimension of the curriculum to meet the needs and aspirations of all its pupils and continues to evaluate and adjust provision to ensure that all pupils have access to appropriate courses and opportunities.

STAFFING

38. There is a good match between the number and quality of teachers and the needs of the curriculum. It is at least satisfactory in all subjects and very good in most. Very effective measures are taken to fill vacancies and to cover long-term absences. The college has been able to make an appointment of a specialist teacher of citizenship for September 2004. The effectiveness of support staff in meeting the needs of the curriculum is also good. The college is taking initiatives, for instance arising from Workplace Reform, to extend the role of support staff. Teaching assistants provide very good support for pupils with special educational needs. There is a need for technical support in music and although the work of science technicians is of high quality, their number is limited. Along with an experienced SENCo and social inclusion manager, there are sufficient teacher assistants to support those pupils with Statements of Special Educational Need as well as other pupils on the college's list of special educational needs. Teacher assistants are enthusiastic and committed to working with pupils with special educational needs and their effective deployment ensures the curricular needs of these pupils are met.

LEARNING RESOURCES

39. The college allocates budgets in line with its development plans and consequently teaching resources are targeted and well managed. There is an adequate supply of books and teaching materials across the college. Good stocks of supporting texts and posters contribute to the impressive attainment in the humanities faculty, and in history in particular. Art and food studies have extensive reference libraries that pupils use well. Equipment provision is satisfactory across the college except in music where up-to-date keyboards and composing equipment are limited.
40. The college has two fully equipped ICT suites and two additional rooms where there are sufficient computers for whole classes to be taught. The library has a further 12 PCs connected to the Internet that are used well by pupils for reference and research. The college is gradually building up stocks of both hardware and software; some departments have acquired new software but titles had yet to be installed at the time of the inspection. A small number of interactive whiteboards are used to good purpose. However, limited access to computers is affecting the learning opportunities for pupils in a range of subjects such as music and art and design.
41. The college library is open to the general public for some 15 hours per week in addition to its usual opening times. Volunteers work in tandem with two dedicated library assistants. The partnership between the college and the community has gone from strength to strength since the County Council withdrew its direct provision in 2003. Book

stocks have blossomed through donations from local residents. There is much to commend this model where the community champions its local college.

ACCOMMODATION

42. The accommodation is good. The college buildings and extensive playing fields, tennis courts, Astro-turf area and swimming pool are used by its pupils and by members of the local community almost every day and evening throughout the year. They are very well maintained, almost litter and graffiti-free, by the site manager and his staff. The building was designed for a much smaller pupil roll and classrooms, especially in design and technology, music and religious education, are too small. The narrow corridors also cause bottlenecks at break time and lesson changes. Ramps provide disabled access to the ground floor but access to the upper floor, where the special needs department is located, is by staircase only. A thoughtful Asset Management Plan and rolling programme of refurbishment have resulted in very good accommodation in science, art, geography and physical education as well as an impressive Project Area. The programme has also refurbished the pupils' toilets in response to the School Council's request. The mobile classrooms used by the modern foreign languages department are unsuitable and due to be replaced in 2006. There is very good provision for gardening and landscaping in an area of the grounds. As at the last inspection, there are insufficient hard play areas.

CARE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

Procedures for ensuring pupil's care, health and safety are very good. The college provides very effective support, advice and guidance for pupils. There is very good involvement of pupils in the college's work and development.

MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- The pastoral system continues to be very effective.
- Very good monitoring of pupils' achievement results in a very good range of intervention measures being effectively targeted. This ensures that pupils achieve well.
- Very good quality careers advice ensures that pupils consider all the options available to them after they leave the college.
- Pupils' views are respected and, where appropriate, acted upon.
- Significant improvements have been made to health and safety procedures and the college provides a very pleasant and safe environment where pupils can flourish.

COMMENTARY

43. The quality of support and guidance is very high. The college is justifiably proud of its well-managed pastoral system that continues to be a strength of its provision. Induction procedures are satisfactory. The college's open and welcoming atmosphere and the support that Year 7 pupils get from staff and older pupils ensure that they quickly settle into college routines. Further improvements have been made to the college's systems for monitoring since the previous inspection. Careful analysis of data results in early identification of pupils who are at risk of underachieving. Staff have very good relationships with pupils and pupils say that teachers quickly recognise when they are struggling academically or having personal difficulties. Personal support is of a high quality and pupils report that they find teachers easy to talk to and very caring. Older

pupils especially appreciate the individual support they receive from subject teachers, form tutors and pastoral staff. Tutor time is not always used effectively and this issue was identified in the previous report.

44. There are many intervention measures that ensure that pupils fulfil their potential. Not only are underachieving pupils quickly recognised, they are very well supported and this ensures that they swiftly get back on track. Academic support is very good. Support starts on transition from Year 6 to 7 with a summer school that focuses on literacy and numeracy. Support for pupils whose attainment is below the national average continues in Year 7. Many initiatives through Years 7 to 8 ensure that pupils are well supported and achieve very well. Older pupils are delighted with the support they receive in Years 10 and 11. This ranges from high quality revision lessons to excellent individual support from subject teachers. The high quality of provision underpins very good achievement.
45. The college has effective relationships with outside specialist agencies. This enhances further the quality of support and guidance for those pupils with special educational needs. Annual reviews are effective and support pupils with statements of special educational need as they move through the college. Parents' and pupils' views are taken into account because they are involved in the setting and reviewing of their targets. The college meets the curricular requirements as outlined in pupils' statements of special educational needs. Whole-college data provides the potential to closely track the progress pupils with special educational needs make.
46. The quality of careers advice continues to be very good. There is a carefully considered programme of careers education and this, together with careful counselling of pupils, ensures that pupils are fully aware of the opportunities available to them after they leave college. However, despite being encouraged to give these matters their full consideration, some pupils are not making effective links between the choice of A-levels they study, access to university degrees and ultimately career options. There are limited university visits and visitors from higher education. Support for those continuing into employment or further education is very good.
47. Processes for seeking pupils' views are very effective. Pupils express their views thoughtfully and responsibly. They are proud of their college and eager for it to continue to improve. The school council has been effective in bringing about change. Peer counsellors are valued by other pupils and are an important factor in the way the college deals with bullying.
48. Significant improvements have been made to arrangements to eliminate and minimise hazards since the previous inspection. Very good management of health and safety has led to improvements in both policy and practice. All decisions concerning health and safety are now based on well-thought-out risk assessment and these procedures, together with thorough maintenance and a rolling programme of improvements to the college building, have resulted in the college providing a very pleasant and safe environment. Comprehensive arrangements are in place for child protection and these have been enhanced since the previous inspection.

PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS, OTHER SCHOOLS AND THE COMMUNITY

The college has **very effective** links with parents. The quality of links with the local community is **excellent**. There are **very good** links with other schools and colleges.

MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- Excellent partnerships with the local community make an important contribution to pupils' personal development.
- Parents' views are taken into account and quickly acted upon.
- Parents receive good quality information about their children's progress which helps them to support their children's learning.
- The college is outward looking and works well in partnership with local and national initiatives to produce a high quality of education.

COMMENTARY

49. Parents are provided with very good quality information about the work of the college. Newsletters and the Governors' Report to Parents not only reflect the busy social life of the college but also contain important information about academic standards. Annual reports on pupils' progress provide a very good opportunity for pupils to write about their own strengths and what they must do to improve. Pupils' mature comments are examined and commented upon by subject teachers and further helpful strategies for improvement are usually provided. Subject-based parents' evenings have recently been supplemented by an annual review day. Parents' views were sought and analysed and further improvements to review processes are planned in response to parents' suggestions.
50. Parents value the college and the high quality education it provides. Although a small number of parents were concerned about how the college responded to their enquiries, the college has good procedures to ensure that parents' concerns are quickly addressed. Parents' views are sought on a regular basis about many aspects of college life. The college responds well and a series of information evenings that encourage parents to help their children has occurred in response to parents' concerns. There is an active Friends' Association. Parents have a significant positive impact, helping their children to achieve very well; for example, the college works jointly with dedicated parents to help younger pupils improve their reading.
51. There are effective links between the learning support department and the parents of pupils with special educational needs. They are invited to, and most attend, annual reviews of pupils with statements of special educational needs. Their views are recorded, hence they are fully involved and informed as to their child's progress towards the targets set out as part of the review process. Parents and pupils are also involved in the setting and review of targets on pupils' IEPs. Parents are kept fully informed of procedures for support of pupils with special educational needs.
52. The college provides an outstanding resource for the local community. It is the hub of community life; it provides not only a very wide range of academic, vocational and leisure courses and a public library and swimming baths but also a base for many local clubs and associations. The college has been instrumental in the development of youth provision in the area. The Parish Council meets on site; governors are heavily involved in the local community. This helps the college to understand local needs and opinions, and to have extensive interaction with a wide range of local groups, including other providers of education. It helps to drive continuous improvement within the college.

EXAMPLE OF OUTSTANDING PRACTICE

LINKS WITH THE COMMUNITY

The college's commitment to the local community is illustrated by its involvement with the on-site charity, *'Turning Red Lights Green'*. A very active partnership with the college has enabled the charity to provide gardening and horticultural experiences on the college site for adults with learning difficulties who are at risk of becoming socially isolated within a rural community. This reflects the college's outstanding commitment to social inclusion. The active partnership has encouraged the charity to flourish and extend provision to other adults who are experiencing social isolation. College pupils access the greenhouses and sensory garden and are able to work towards horticultural qualifications. Pupils for whom education is often not an easy experience gain in confidence and stature as they work alongside adults with special needs. Pupils and adults have worked together to improve the college grounds, the sensory garden is developing well and the delightful scented rose garden is a credit to all concerned. Pupils of all levels of attainment recognise the value of this provision which makes a very significant contribution to all pupils' personal development. Pupils learn to respect adults whose needs and lives are very different from their own.

53. The college is very outward-looking. It generously shares its expertise and is still very willing to learn from others. It is this open-minded attitude, together with the sharing of expertise between local providers, that has helped to drive up standards. A partnership with the Local Education Authority and other local schools has produced a very good drugs policy and work is in progress to ensure that feeder primary schools and the college implement a consistent approach to promoting good behaviour. A transition project has been established with the main feeder primary schools and helps to ease transfer. Links with post-16 providers are developing well. Careful counselling and careers advice result in pupils starting post-16 courses that are well suited to their needs. The college works well with other local providers to ensure that pathways continue beyond Bottisham College.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The college is very effectively led and managed. The leadership of the warden is **very good**. A strong team of senior and middle managers supports him well; they provide very good leadership in the college. There is **very good** management of the college; efficient and effective monitoring systems have been put in place. The overall governance of the college is very good. Governors are fully involved in the strategic planning for the college. The financial management of the college is excellent.

MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- The leadership by the warden is very good; his vision provides purpose and direction for the college.
- Strategic planning is very good; this is reflected in detailed and focused development plans to promote an innovative culture.
- Governors make a very good contribution to the effective leadership of the college.
- Senior and middle managers carry out their delegated roles very well.
- The leadership and management of the humanities provision are excellent.
- The good quality of leadership shown in pastoral care adds significantly to the college's ethos.
- Financial management is excellent; it is highly efficient and supports effective decision-making.

COMMENTARY

54. The warden provides very good leadership and a clear sense of direction for the college. He has instilled an ethos that builds upon the principles of respect for the individual and high expectations to sustain and improve standards. The college has placed an emphasis on improving the effectiveness of learning in lessons, supportive self-review and involvement with the community. The college is managed with thoroughness and a clear purpose to consolidate strengths and promote innovation.
55. Developments in the college are based on high quality financial planning. This is reflected in the detailed bid for Humanities College status, the effective control of the budget within tight financial constraints and the management of the financial impact of 'workforce reforms'. The college development plan is effectively linked to budgetary allocations. The plan clearly identifies whole-college priorities such as improving the curricular provision and a focus on the quality of teaching, all within the context of sustaining standards.
56. An effective senior leadership team ably supports the warden. The team works very well together and shows a strong commitment to the objectives of the college. It exercises its delegated responsibilities well, conducting monitoring and review activities systematically and efficiently. The quality assurance procedures that operate within the college are very effective. A systematic review of performance for each subject leads to targets being drawn up for both the whole college and individual subjects. Each target has clear criteria so that its success can be measured, and the level of planning for meeting these targets is particularly detailed. Consequently, the standards achieved by the college have continued to improve. The overall quality of middle management in the college is very good, with significant strengths being shown in history, geography and pastoral care.
57. Procedures for the performance management of staff and its effectiveness in bringing about improvement are good. The performance management of teachers provides a clear focus for continuing professional development within the confines of the college budget. The effectiveness of support staff benefits from a well-devised appraisal system which includes self-evaluation. The college is committed to promoting career development of its support staff. The college takes a proactive approach in the recruitment of teaching staff. Arrangements for induction are very good and there is a high retention rate. The college makes a very good contribution to initial teacher training, mainly through Cambridge University.
58. The overall governance of the college is very good. The governors show a strong commitment to the college and are knowledgeable about all aspects of its work. Governors support the college well and have been particularly active in promoting improvements to the buildings, sustaining and developing community links and the drive for specialist status. The college is very inclusive; it has in place detailed policies on race relations, respect for the rights of the individual and equality of opportunity. The governing body is an effective team and working relationships with the staff are very good.
59. Very effective leadership and management procedures have resulted in a good whole-college ethos for the inclusion and support of pupils with special educational needs. The SENCO has ensured that the ethos of provision and support for pupils with special educational needs has a high profile and that staff are fully involved in the overall provision for them. However, the analysis and evaluation of data to show how pupils with special educational needs are achieving in Years 7 to 9 is not yet fully effective. The

college pays due regard to the Code of Practice for special educational needs and statutory requirements are fully met.

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	3,545,849
Total expenditure	3,451,995
Expenditure per pupil	3,351

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	244,062
Balance carried forward to the next year	93,854

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

Provision in English is **good**.

MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- Well above average standards and improvement in literacy because of strong focused leadership.
- Teaching and learning are good and pupils achieve well.
- Very good enrichment activities to develop pupils socially and academically.
- Marking is inconsistent and some pupils are not sure about how to improve.
- There is limited access for pupils to ICT because of a lack of resources.

COMMENTARY

60. Results and current standards reflect continuing improvement by Year 9 pupils. Overall, pupils' achievement is good, taking into account the 2003 results as well as work seen. The head of department has succeeded in developing a shared vision for the improvement of teaching and learning.
61. In work seen, pupils' attainment by the end of Year 9 and Year 11 is well above average. This represents good achievement because when pupils joined the college, their overall standards were above average. Standards in literacy have improved, showing particularly good achievement. Most pupils have a very good knowledge and understanding of literacy skills by the time they have been in college for three years. Their oral skills are very good in classroom discussion and in formal situations. Listening skills are also very good because pupils listen attentively and respectfully. Writing standards are well above average; most pupils have grasped key skills in spelling, punctuation and grammar and their work is generally well presented. Writing is creative and poetic and pupils enjoy writing imaginative, descriptive stories. The standards of all pupils are benefiting from a wide choice in the variety of writing assignments and work that is planned to match their needs. Attainment in English by the end of Year 11 is well above average. Pupils write with understanding of Shakespearean texts and literature from different cultures. They can place texts in an historical and social context and analyse social and moral themes with flair and empathy. They evaluate character and theme, and structure written work appropriately. A minority of pupils rely too heavily on the teacher and their work is lacking in detailed understanding and insight. Pupils with special educational needs, ethnic minority pupils, boys, girls and the able and talented achieve equally as well because work is matched to their needs.
62. The quality of teaching and learning is good, and there is outstanding practice in the department. In a small minority of lessons, pupils learn less than in others because they are not involved enough in their own learning and lack independence. In the vast majority of lessons, there is a brisk pace, pupils are clearly motivated and a large amount of work is completed. Pupils enjoy exchanging ideas with each other and their teacher in an

atmosphere of achievement and respect. Pupils respond well to their teachers' care for achievement and this helps develop the good relationships evident in the department. In an excellent Year 10 lesson on 'Carol Ann Duffey', the pupils evaluated the character of Miss Havisham with empathy and understood the historical context. They enjoyed exchanging ideas and analysing the best possible structure for their work. Consequently, they presented their findings intelligently and accurately. The teacher sensitively drew out their ideas and encouraged their thinking.

63. The leadership of the department is good. The head of department has developed a cohesive team which is committed to raising standards as well as making English lessons a pleasurable experience. She has a clear educational vision. Teachers share the preparation of schemes of work and departmental responsibilities; as a result, they are regularly discussing what is best for the pupils. Very good liaison with the college librarian supports learning. Procedures for assessment are clear and used by the head of department to set individual pupils' targets. This is not consistent in practice and ongoing assessment is sometimes bland and lacking in specific targets to guide pupils' improvement. There are some gaps in marking and a small number of pupils are not aware of their standards or targets and therefore are not sure how to improve. Lack of ICT resources is a barrier to learning, especially for lower-attaining boys. There is a wide range of extra-curricular activities, both to support learning and to develop social and cultural skills.
64. Progress since the last inspection has been satisfactory. Standards have been maintained by Year 11 pupils and improved by Year 9 pupils. Assessment is still an area for development and although ICT resources have improved, they are still not sufficient.

LANGUAGE AND LITERACY ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

65. This is a strength of the college. Management in departments has been very effective in putting into practice the improvement of pupils' literacy skills. This is because the college takes it seriously and is committed to improving basic skills in order to raise standards. A range of texts, in all subjects, encourages the use of technical and specialist vocabulary, especially in mathematics, history, science and English. The English department has dictionaries available in each classroom and key words are displayed prominently in most classrooms to familiarise pupils with them. Carefully censored Internet access allows pupils to research topics in detail. The library is a valuable resource for improving research skills and reading. Very good relationships between the librarians and staff and pupils contribute very well to improving learning. Pupils discuss their work enthusiastically and sensibly and show respect to their peers and staff by listening attentively. Reading fluency is encouraged and seen to particular effect in English and history. Subject teachers undertake the teaching of basic literacy skills conscientiously as a means of improving standards. In order to maintain standards and aim for further improvement, the literacy co-ordinator is determined to monitor and develop the work of each department.

DRAMA

The provision in drama was not inspected in detail but some lessons were seen.

66. The teaching of drama is an asset to the curriculum. The quality of teaching and learning is good. The teaching of drama not only broadens the curriculum but also improves

standards, because pupils are able to transfer the skills they have learned into other subject areas. Teaching and learning emphasise decision-making skills and provide opportunities for pupils to think for themselves. Pupils learn well overall because the lessons are well prepared and they enjoy the subject. An emphasis on varied activities, personal development and collaborative work enhances the enjoyment and motivation of the pupils. In a Year 9 lesson, dramatic rehearsals were professional, carefully planned and executed, and skilful. This was because of the high expectations of the teacher and carefully-targeted lesson planning. A wide range of extra-curricular activities contributes to the positive ethos of the college.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Provision in French, German and Spanish is **good**.

MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- Standards are well above average in French, German and Spanish.
- The quality of teaching and learning is good and enables pupils to achieve well.
- Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good and they have good relationships with their teachers.
- The curriculum provision is very good.
- Assessment information is not always used effectively to track and plan pupils' progress in lessons.
- Opportunities for pupils to use the languages themselves, informally, or to communicate their ideas are limited.

COMMENTARY

67. Standards of work seen in French, German and Spanish are well above average. All pupils display a high degree of independence in manipulating the languages, both in speech and in writing. Listening and reading skills are well developed and pupils respond promptly and appropriately to questions and instructions given in the language being learned in lessons. By the end of Year 9, the majority of pupils use a good range of structures and tenses to communicate their ideas and describe events in the past, present and future. They express opinions and justify their views. By the end of Year 11, most write and speak at greater length and in more detail, comparing and contrasting ideas successfully, using a wider range of vocabulary and structures. They have a very good understanding of grammar, identify and apply patterns successfully to construct their own sentences and transfer language from one context to another from the very beginning in Year 7. In French, lower-attaining pupils and pupils with special educational needs rely more heavily on guidance and models to do this but still display a measure of independence. There is no significant difference in work seen between the performance of girls and boys or between languages. By the end of Year 9, teacher assessments indicate that standards are below average. Inspection evidence, however, does not support this and indicates rather that assessments underestimate pupils' performance by up to one level. In GCSE examinations in 2003, the proportion of candidates attaining grades A*-C is well above average in German. In French, the proportion of candidates attaining A*-C grades is broadly average but since the proportion of pupils entered for examination is very high compared to national figures, any comparison with national averages is unreliable. Almost all candidates attain a grade at GCSE in both languages. This represents good achievement for all pupils in relation to their prior attainment. The trend is one of continuing improvement. Standards have been maintained over the last three years and represent a significant improvement since the last inspection.
68. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good overall; they arrive promptly to lessons, settle quickly and listen attentively. When given the opportunity to work independently or in small groups or pairs, they organise themselves well and display high levels of concentration. Pupils are sometimes reluctant to speak in front of the whole class but respond enthusiastically to pair work, games and problem-solving activities. In a Year 9 lesson, there was poor behaviour and attitudes, it was in response to poor control and management and the quality of teaching.

69. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall and enables pupils to achieve well. In two-thirds of lessons observed, the quality of teaching and learning was good or very good. One poor lesson was observed where pupils' progress was too slow and they did not achieve as well as they should. Teachers have a very good command of the languages they teach and use the languages effectively, and often exclusively, in lessons. Pupils therefore benefit from very good role models and their listening skills are well developed as a result. Opportunities are sometimes missed, however, to exploit formal listening activities fully to further develop listening techniques. Presentations are usually clear and this, coupled with skilful questioning, enables pupils to rapidly identify and apply patterns, understand and use new language successfully themselves. In a Year 9 German lesson, for example, pupils made very good progress in learning how to use the past tense because they identified and applied patterns themselves and were then given the opportunity to practise the structures involved and to use them to give and gather information about their holidays. Lesson planning is good; resources are usually appropriate and activities well sequenced, allowing pupils to build successfully and confidently on what has gone before. In some instances, however, whole-class activities lack sufficient focus to ensure that all pupils can follow what is going on. Assessment information is not always used effectively to ensure lower-attaining pupils can succeed in reading and listening tasks and this reduces, rather than increases their confidence. In some lessons, teacher-led activities dominate and this decreases pupils' opportunities to use the languages themselves. Pupils achieve very well when they are given the opportunity to practise informally and use the languages to find out information themselves.
70. The curriculum provision in languages is very good. Most pupils have the opportunity to study two languages from Year 8 and as a result feel confident enough to continue to GCSE in either or both of the languages they have studied. The curriculum is enriched by established exchanges to France and Germany and the opportunity to communicate with native speakers in French and Spanish through e-mail and other links.
71. Leadership and management are good. Teachers work well as a team and there is a good level of consistency across the department. Assessment data is used well to identify areas for improvement and appropriate action is taken to raise standards, but the use of assessment information to plan for the progress of pupils of differing ability in lessons or enable pupils to evaluate and plan their own progress is, as yet, underdeveloped. Standards have improved significantly since the last inspection, moving from average to well above average. Spanish has been introduced successfully as an additional second language and consistency in teaching and learning has improved. The languages being learned are now used effectively as the main means of communication in lessons and, as a result, pupils' listening and speaking skills have improved considerably.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- Pupils achieve very well because they are very well taught.
- Standards are well above the national average.

- Pupils are very good independent learners who enjoy thinking about challenges met in their work.
- Very good leadership and management set a clear vision for the subject and have established an imaginative curriculum.
- Pupils have a very good understanding of how mathematics is useful to them.

COMMENTARY

72. Until recently, pupils entered the college with standards above the national average. Recently, standards on entry have been nearer average. By the end of Year 9, standards are well above the national average. This represents very good achievement. By that age, pupils can form and test hypotheses, giving very detailed explanations of their work. They use algebra well but have not yet mastered trigonometry. Pupils continue to achieve very well through Years 10 and 11, standards remaining well above average. By the end of Year 11, most pupils are competent in all the work of the GCSE course. The highest-attaining pupils study A-level mathematics during Years 10 and 11. They achieve very high standards on this course. Pupils with special educational needs achieve very well because work is well tailored to their needs. They are very well supported by teacher assistants with very good knowledge of how to provide help. No significant difference between the standards of boys' and girls' work was seen during the inspection.
73. Pupils learn very well because they are very well taught. Two excellent lessons were observed and no unsatisfactory teaching was seen. Pupils appreciate the importance of mathematics because teachers regularly refer to applications. For example, Year 8 pupils learning about volumes considered how long the oxygen in a sealed room would last. Pupils have very positive attitudes to their work and many enjoy the intellectual challenges they face. Pupils are very confident when exploring mathematics and in formulating and testing their own ideas. They succeed because they have to think for themselves. In this college, mathematics is not about just remembering sets of facts. Frequently, pupils help each other to learn. Pupils give very good explanations of their work, both in writing and orally, showing that they have a very good understanding of their work. In a small number of lessons, teachers do not meet fully the needs of all pupils by providing an appropriate range of activities. This leads to work being too difficult for some pupils whilst being insufficiently demanding for others.

EXAMPLE OF OUTSTANDING PRACTICE

AN INVESTIGATIVE APPROACH TO TEACHING MATHEMATICS WHICH ENCOURAGES DIALOGUE AND DEBATE.

Year 10 pupils had been introduced to Pythagoras's theorem. To 'practise' their new learning, they considered the shortest distance by which a spider might reach a dead, and hence stationary, fly across the surface of various prisms. As well as practising the intended skill, pupils had to develop methods for envisioning a three-dimensional situation in two dimensions. Empirically, many realised the inherent dangers of relying on sketches, for example assuming that something which looked like 90° was, in fact, not a right angle. Pupils supported each other very well in groups, often constructively questioning the work of their partners. The teacher's key input was the way in which she questioned work, sometimes when she had noticed an error, on other occasions provocatively challenging pupils to justify something which was correct. Previous learning and understanding were impressive as pupils, without any prompting, applied trigonometry, angle properties and algebra. In setting the challenge, no measurements were given by the teacher. All pupils chose to 'invent' some dimensions but by the end of the lesson, pupils were generalising through the use of algebra, producing, and testing formulae. None had yet derived a formula for an n -sided prism but that was because they had run out of time. Learning was excellent because of the high levels of independence and confidence displayed and

74. The department is very well led and managed. The head of department has expert knowledge of the subject and how to teach it. Highly appropriate plans for further improvement are being implemented. The work of the department is very carefully monitored. Very good links have been established with primary schools, now looking at learning. There are also very good links with post-16 colleges. There has been very good improvement since the previous inspection. Standards have been maintained, teaching has improved, as has the provision for pupils with special needs, and the issues identified for development have been successfully tackled.

MATHEMATICS ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

75. Pupils are very competent in using their mathematics in other subjects. Consequently, in no subject is their learning held back because of lack of mathematical competency. In religious education, pupils explore the significance of the symbolic use of numbers in several religions. Mathematical skills are frequently used in geography, for example to analyse data. Pupils competently insert formulæ into spreadsheets. Regular liaison ensures that science teachers know what mathematical skills pupils have. Mathematics lessons frequently use examples from other subjects, preparing pupils to use their knowledge in other lessons.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **very good**.

MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- National Curriculum tests and GCSE results are well above average.
- Thorough planning results in a very effective science curriculum.
- Teaching is very good and pupils' learning is very good as a result.
- Pupils have very positive attitudes to science and this improves their learning.
- The leadership and management of the department are very good.
- Teachers and other support staff work very effectively together as a team.
- The marking of pupils' books could be more effective.

COMMENTARY

76. National test results for Year 9 pupils in 2003 were well above the national average. They were also well above average in terms of what might have been expected from pupils' prior attainment on entry in Year 7. Results in previous years have been consistently well above average and have improved faster than the national rate. As in previous years, pupils' 2003 results in GCSE science for both grades A*-C and grades A*-G were well above average. Science GCSE results are on an upward trend. Girls perform relatively better in their GCSE examinations than boys. Results in national tests and GCSE examinations indicate that the achievement of all pupils is very good.
77. Current standards in Year 9 are well above average and represent very good achievement. Pupils enter the college with attainment that is somewhat above average for their age. As the result of very good teaching, they make very good progress in their knowledge and understanding of scientific concepts and theories. For example, pupils understand the importance of ensuring that data collected in experiments is accurate and consistent, improving overall standards. Standards of work seen in Year 10 are also well above average. Scrutiny of Year 11 work and analysis of performance data indicate that standards in this year group are also well above average. Pupils have a very good knowledge and understanding of biology, chemistry and physics. Their enquiry skills are also well above average because most lessons involve pupils carrying out experimental work. This improves both their skills in this attainment target and their interest and motivation in the subject. Their achievement is very good because they continue to make more rapid progress than would be expected from their attainment in Year 9. For example, Year 10 pupils are able to write chemical formulae and balance complex equations successfully. Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress and achieve very well as the result of work that is very well matched to their capabilities, coupled with very good support from teachers and teaching assistants.
78. Teaching and learning are very good across all age ranges. Lessons are very well planned so that the use of time and resources is very good. As a result, pupils learn better. Work is challenging for all levels of capabilities, with the result that pupils sustain their interest and concentration very well. Teachers have a very secure command of their subject areas, and their clear explanations of scientific concepts and theories help improve pupils' learning considerably. As a result, interest and motivation are high and time spent in lessons is very productive. Behaviour is always very good, due in part to the learning strategies employed by science teachers and also to pupils' very positive

attitudes. Pupils' work is marked regularly. However, pupils' progress would be further improved if they were given an indication of the standard of work achieved and what they need to do to improve. A strong feature of the science curriculum is that teaching is made more effective through the use of ICT. For example, teaching was improved in a Year 8 lesson measuring heat changes, by the use of data loggers rather than simply using thermometers.

79. Leadership and management are very good. The head of department has built a very effective team of teachers and support staff so that the main focus is on raising pupils' achievement. The science curriculum is very good. For example, new schemes of work are a very effective tool for delivering science lessons and raising achievement. Since the previous inspection, improvement has been very good. In particular, teaching has improved. Key outputs such as National Curriculum test and GCSE results are improving. The department is in a very good position to move forward.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in information and communication technology (ICT) is **good**.

MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- The standard of pupils' work is well above average by the end of Year 11.
- The standard of teaching in Years 10 and 11 is good for those pupils following the applied GCSE course.
- The subject co-ordinator has insufficient non-contact time to monitor provision effectively.
- ICT assessment in Year 9 does not provide sufficient scope to accommodate the more talented pupils.
- There are not enough computers of sufficient quality for up-to-date software.

COMMENTARY

80. In 2003, the small number of pupils following the GNVQ course all achieved a pass level, with a significant majority achieving merit level. By the end of Year 9, teacher assessment indicates that National Curriculum levels are above the national average. Work seen during the inspection provides evidence that levels are well above average for the more talented pupils.
81. Pupils' achievement by the end of Year 9 is good. Pupils are sufficiently challenged and produce work at a standard well above that expected nationally in some subjects. Pupils studying ICT in Year 7 now have discrete lessons, with those in Years 8 and 9 to be included next year. The college is phasing in nationally-recognised units of work in an effort to improve provision further. Pupils' achievement in Years 10 and 11 is also good and the new dual-accredited Applied GCSE course is better suited to their needs.
82. There are good pockets of ICT use across the curriculum, particularly in design and technology, history and science. Where ICT is being used well, it is clearly helping to support learning and raise standards. Pupils' attitudes are very good.
83. Overall, the quality of teaching in Years 7, 8 and 9 is good. It is lively and stimulating and engages pupils well. Homework is used effectively to reinforce and extend learning. In

Years 10 and 11, the teaching is also good, with the curriculum delivered predominately by very committed non-specialist teachers. This has a positive impact on pupils' learning because it is these teachers that enable the pupils to achieve high standards.

84. Management and leadership are good. The ICT co-ordinator has other major responsibilities in the college and this reduces the time that is available to manage this key area of the curriculum. Inevitably, this affects ICT both as a subject and the monitoring of its effectiveness in other subjects. Teacher assessment at the end of Year 9 is too harsh and so not enough pupils are awarded the higher levels. In Years 10 and 11, marking and feedback provided for pupils are good because pupils are clear about how to improve their work. The recording and tracking of pupils' progress are also good. Detailed schemes of work are not yet fully in place for pupils in Years 8 and 9. There is a planned programme to replace and upgrade ICT resources as they become obsolete. Progress since the last inspection has been satisfactory.
85. During the inspection, the ICT rooms were under-utilised despite Year 11 pupils having left. Interactive whiteboards are beginning to be used effectively. Two dedicated technicians provide good support for both the curriculum and system maintenance and this has a positive impact on standards.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

86. The programmes for using ICT across the curriculum are well developed overall. Effective use of computers is made in design and technology, history, and science. These subjects make good use of the Internet for pupils' research activities; they also make use of spreadsheets to analyse and present statistical data, and software to help pupils' designing and simulation of electronic circuits. There is evidence of word-processing and desktop publishing being well used to improve the presentation of work in most subjects, but in art and music, the use of computers is underdeveloped.

HUMANITIES

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Provision in religious education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results in GCSE examinations are above average.
- The quality of resources is good.
- There has been good improvement since the last inspection.
- Assessment does not always help pupils sufficiently to know how they could improve; there is some inconsistency in marking.

COMMENTARY

87. Overall standards at the end of Year 9 are average. By the end of Year 9, pupils have a satisfactory understanding and grasp of Christianity and the key elements of Judaism, Sikhism and Hinduism, and a growing understanding of Islam, which has recently been introduced. Pupils are curious about the impact of faith on their everyday life and ask some searching questions. They are gaining greater awareness of how religions

address ultimate questions through their beliefs and practices, and are able to reflect on these questions from their own experiences and perspective. For example, in Year 7, pupils studying the story of creation from the Judaeo-Christian perspective observed that if Adam and Eve were the only two people on earth, then we must all be related. Year 9 pupils reflected on the story of the Resurrection and asked why some people believe and some do not, what happened at the resurrection, and offered counter-arguments. Pupils generally concentrate well and have the capability to work independently and collaboratively in a disciplined learning environment.

88. At the end of Year 11, standards of pupils taking the GCSE course are above the national averages. Standards of work for non-GCSE groups at the end of Year 11 are satisfactory. Pupils are beginning to show awareness of the spiritual dimensions of human experience and how it may be felt and expressed in religions as well as in other contexts. The course is delivered through a thematic modular approach of two lessons on and two lessons off. Some planned religious education teaching takes place through personal, social and health education (PSHE). No Year 11 and only one Year 10 lesson was observed due to Year 11 pupils being on study leave and timetabling for Year 10 pupils. Pupils' work was examined and showed that pupils who were doing GCSE were making good progress; however, the non-GCSE groups were making only satisfactory progress, with much of their knowledge and understanding of key religious ideas being limited.
89. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. There are two specialists who are experienced practitioners, committed to religious education. The subject is taught with empathy and enthusiasm which are transmitted to the pupils, particularly at GCSE. However, those who are less experienced and non-specialist sometimes find the teaching of the deeper levels of the religious concepts challenging. Lower-attaining pupils have the knowledge, but lack the deeper understanding or the ability to analyse the effect that religion can have on their personal lives. Girls attain better standards than boys, who tend to be more vociferous in class.
90. Where the teachers' knowledge and understanding of religious education is good, their teaching is generally good. Lessons are generally well planned and in line with the Cambridgeshire Agreed Syllabus. The learning is good where the lessons are delivered at good pace and the challenge is appropriate to the pupils' prior knowledge and understanding. However, planning does not always take account of pupils' prior knowledge and understanding of both general issues and of specific areas of study. Where teachers know their pupils well, they have high expectations. Teachers do not always show the pupils how they can improve their grades or work. The marking of pupils' work is inconsistent and not always in line with the whole-college policy. There is a need for teachers to monitor learning regularly and judge how successful the teaching is in raising the standards. The use of ICT is encouraged in all years in the completion of extended essays and project work. For example, Year 9 pupils are sent daily in the autumn term to find the haku of the day from the Golden Temple of Amritsar website in support of their study of Sikhism.
91. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The two specialists are supported by non-specialists and some part-time staff. The head of department is experienced in the teaching of religious education and leads the department well. He needs, however, to monitor and support the non-specialist teachers to enable them to respond more effectively to some of the questions raised by pupils. The curriculum for pupils in Years 7

to 9 has been reviewed and reworked. This development has been well received by both pupils and religious education staff.

92. There are regular planned visits to the Bottisham parish and other churches, the Danavira of the Cambridge Buddhist Centre, liaison with several local religious charities and trusts, and the Sikh gurdwaras at Hitchin.
93. The college has responded well to the issues raised by the last inspection. The resources have been increased. The department now has textbooks and artefacts for all the religions being studied. The college complies with statutory requirements by following the Cambridgeshire Agreed Syllabus.

GEOGRAPHY

Provision in geography is **very good**.

MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- Excellent leadership provides clear vision and promotes close teamwork.
- Very good teaching ensures that pupils learn and achieve very well in all years.
- The use of imaginative starter activities engages pupils' interest and good plenary sessions reinforce learning.
- The GCSE results of boys and girls are well above average.
- There is insufficient fieldwork in Years 7 to 9.

COMMENTARY

94. At the end of Year 9 standards are well above average for both boys and girls, although more girls achieve the higher National Curriculum levels. Work seen indicates that all groups of pupils in Years 7 to 9, including those with special educational needs, are working at levels above the national expectation for their age. Pupils respond well to an enquiry approach; for example, in Year 9 lessons on the sustainable development of the Brazilian rain forests, pupils successfully sorted and analysed information, made valid judgements and raised their own questions.
95. In 2003, there was no difference between the numbers of boys and girls attaining grades A* to C at GCSE. As a result of strategies to improve boys' performance, the differences at this level which were noted in the previous report are no longer evident, although more girls still achieve the highest grades, A* and A. Overall, in 2003, pupils attained higher grades in geography than in their other subjects. Pupils are very well prepared for examinations. This was clearly seen in the work of those Year 10 pupils who recently sat the decision-making paper and in their coursework lessons.
96. The very good achievement of pupils is a result of the high quality of teaching and the very positive attitudes shown by pupils. The quality of teaching and learning was at least good in all lessons seen and was very good or excellent in three-quarters of the lessons. Pupils respond to their teachers' enthusiasm and become fully involved in their work. Very good relationships in the classroom mean that pupils are confident in contributing to lessons. Excellent classroom management allows pupils to engage in a range of exciting learning activities in each lesson. Lessons are lively, have a brisk pace and are planned around stimulating resources produced by the teachers. Pupils enjoy their work; they

settle to tasks quickly and work very well in pairs and groups. Marking is thorough and helpful. Good liaison between class teachers and teacher assistants also provides good support for pupils.

97. The subject makes a very good contribution to developing pupils' literacy and to pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural education, for example by exploring 'fair trade' issues in Year 8 lessons based around a family of cocoa farmers in Ghana. Although pupils are encouraged to use ICT for investigations, the opportunities for first-hand observation and data collection through fieldwork in Years 7 to 9 are limited.
98. Leadership and management are excellent. The geography teachers work closely in evaluating the effectiveness of their teaching and share in developing resources. Non-specialist teachers of Year 7 classes are very well supported. Assessment practice and the monitoring of pupils' progress are very good. Improvement since the previous inspection is very good. In the past two years, special progress has been made in extending the range of learning activities through the subject's work with the Key Stage 3 Strategy.

HISTORY

Provision in history is **excellent**.

MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- Standards at GCSE are well above national norms, especially for the number of pupils achieving the highest grades.
- There is excellent leadership and management of the department.
- The quality of teaching and learning is very good and sometimes excellent.
- There is a very strong emphasis placed on the development of historical skills.
- Pupils have very positive attitudes towards their learning.
- There is a very strong sense of shared purpose in lessons that encourages all pupils to do their best.

COMMENTARY

99. In recent GCSE examinations, results have been well above national averages and a particularly commendable feature has been the very large number of pupils attaining the highest grades. Standards as seen in the current inspection are also well above those expected by the end of Years 9 and 11 and this represents very high levels of achievement. From Year 7 onwards, pupils develop subject skills very rapidly and are soon familiar with historical terminology and the critical use of sources. They also learn to write in a variety of contexts and some very detailed and impressive projects were seen from Year 9 pupils on the Battle of the Somme. These very high standards are maintained in Years 10 and 11 by all pupils. At this stage, pupils extend their subject knowledge and understanding in depth and are able to produce detailed answers to GCSE questions in order to achieve the highest grades. Lower-attaining pupils, and those with special educational needs, also achieve very well but there is a lack of suitable materials to suit their individual needs.
100. These very high standards are underpinned by the quality of teaching, which is very good and sometimes excellent. The previous inspection report raised concerns about the

clarity of lesson objectives. This is no longer the case. All lessons are planned meticulously and teachers have very high expectations of all pupils. There is, above all, an air of rigour and shared purpose to lessons and this gives pupils the confidence to explore issues and air their opinions. There is also a very strong emphasis on the development of historical skills and all pupils are expected to contribute to classroom debate and discussion. They do so with considerable enthusiasm and maturity and show very positive attitudes in all lessons. As a result, they thoroughly enjoy the pursuit of knowledge as budding historians.

101. The department benefits from excellent leadership and management. There is a very strong sense of teamwork and commitment to high standards. Documentation is very thorough and there are excellent revision guides for the GCSE course. The monitoring of pupils' performance is very thorough and all pupils are given clear advice on how to improve their written work. Pupils also benefit from numerous opportunities to visit places of historical interest. ICT is now playing an increasing role in the work of the department.
102. Overall, the department has made very good progress since the previous inspection. History is a highly popular and successful subject in the college and the department has the undoubted capacity to build further on its already notable success.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- Well-above-average GCSE results with a significant number of A and A* grades.
- Boys' achievement is not as good as the girls'.
- Excellent facilities for the teaching of food studies and electronics.
- High quality, committed and enthusiastic teaching tailored to suit individual pupils.
- Good home-produced teaching materials to support a wide range of projects in Years 7, 8 and 9.

COMMENTARY

103. Achievement is good by the end of Year 9. Standards on entry in Year 7 are below average but by the end of Year 9, standards are above average. The girls do better than the boys. The higher-ability pupils achieve higher standards because they can express their ideas through good annotated sketches and take more care when shaping and assembling products. For example, the finishing of harlequin shoulder bags and decorated cushions is impressive, particularly the high quality of hand-stitching. Pupils' motivation in food studies lessons is very good. However, the low attention span of boys in electronics and graphics lessons is noticeable. At the end of Year 9, written work and finished products of the higher-attaining pupils approach standards usually demonstrated by pupils two years older. The progress made by lower-attaining pupils is good because of the well-targeted support they receive from dedicated teaching assistants.
104. Achievement is very good in Years 10 and 11. Overall, standards in the range of GCSE courses offered are well above average. They are highest in textiles and food studies.

There are some stunning pieces of pupils' coursework, for example in graphics where 'pop-up' books are produced to commercially competent standards. Year on year, pupils' GCSE portfolios and products are finished to the highest standards. However, in the 2003 GCSE examinations, the graphics course results were significantly below those of their other subjects.

105. Overall, the quality of teaching is good, with many lessons being very good. In the most effective lessons, teachers' preparation is very good, teachers competently demonstrate the skills they wish their pupils to acquire, use skilful question-and-answer sessions, and keep the pace of the lesson brisk with no time wasted. Pupils' learning is supported well with high quality workbooks. In recent times, the college has experienced major problems in the recruitment of full-time qualified teachers. It has successfully recruited a number of part-time teachers and teaching assistants, together with instructors who are working well as a co-ordinated team.
106. Leadership and management are very good. The head of the department is well aware of the features of his area and systems are in place to raise further the pupils' attainment. Pupils' work is well marked and pupils are made aware of what they need to do to improve their work. The department continues to build on its strengths and steadily improves. There has been good progress made since the last inspection.
107. The food and electronics areas have been refurbished to a high standard. Vapour and dust extraction systems are very good. There is insufficient computer-aided manufacturing equipment.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

ART AND DESIGN

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

MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- Standards of achievement are very good.
- Teaching and learning are very good.
- The department is very well led and managed.
- Pupils' use of sketchbooks in Years 7 to 9 is not yet sufficiently experimental.
- Lesson endings do not require pupils to discuss or reflect on their work.
- Statutory requirements relating to ICT are not met.

COMMENTARY

108. Examination results in 2003 were well above average, an improvement on 2002 and results at the last inspection. The girls' results were well above average. Pupils' work is well above average. The work at the end of Year 9 is above average. Sketchbooks are used for drawings of man-made and natural forms but the drawings do not record particular information about tone, space or texture. There is an emphasis on finished work at the expense of experimentation. Pupils do not use computers in Years 7 to 9. Recognising their varied, often limited, knowledge of art when they arrive in Year 7, the pupils' positive response to challenging work leads to very good achievement by the end of Year 9. Increased experimentation sustains very good achievement and well above

average standards to the end of Year 11. Pupils research and investigate through drawing and sketchbook usage to produce original innovative sculpture and painting influenced by European, American and multi-cultural artists. The most able pupils achieve very well and above expected numbers gained GCSE A* grades. The least able and those of minority ethnic heritage also make very good progress because teachers know and manage their classes very skilfully and plan lessons to engage each pupil. The range of practical processes challenges the boys, whose work meets expectations.

109. Lessons observed and work in folders demonstrate that teaching and learning are very good. Teachers are very knowledgeable and generate very good attitudes in class. Lessons start when expectations of creativity and industry are made clear but opportunities for pupils to discuss and reflect on their work at the ends of lessons are sometimes missed. Activities focus on artists' work and methods, encouraging pupils to learn for themselves. Year 7 pupils were able to roll clay into even slabs without the benefit of rolling guides, a task more appropriate for much older children. Pupils have a clear view of how well they are doing and of how to improve.
110. Consistently rising standards and very good learning and achievement make it clear that leadership and management are very good. Teaching and learning are monitored regularly. The accommodation is very good and display adds to the college's ethos. The Royal Academy Outreach programme, artists-in-residence and after college photography classes enrich the curriculum. The shortage of computers prevents full delivery of the National Curriculum. Assessment data is not used to set targets or strengthen the curriculum. Subject documentation lacks details particular to the department's pupils.
111. There has been good improvement since the last inspection. High standards have been maintained and are rising. Pupils' knowledge of art has improved but experimentation in Year 9 sketchbooks remains underdeveloped. Teaching, learning and pupils' attitudes have improved.

MUSIC

Provision in music is **very good**.

MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- Good teaching results in pupils achieving well.
- Standards in Years 10 and 11 are well above average.
- The music ICT resources are inadequate to enable the department to meet National Curriculum requirements fully.
- The extensive range of extra-curricular activities and performance opportunities contribute significantly to pupils' personal development.

COMMENTARY

112. By the end of Year 9, standards in music are above average. Pupils enter the college in Year 7 with attainment that is average and, with the benefit of good teaching, they achieve well. Pupils create successful compositions combining melody, rhythm and chords. They sing and perform confidently, showing good ensemble skills. The more able pupils explore and develop their ideas further in their compositions and show a greater understanding of musical styles.

113. GCSE results for 2003 were well above national averages. Since the previous inspection, results have been consistently well above average. Pupils currently in Year 11 are achieving standards that are well above average. This is because they are taught well and receive extra support outside lessons. They also receive instrumental or vocal tuition and take part in extra-curricular activities and performances.
114. Teaching and learning are good. Lessons are well planned and pupils are helped to achieve the musical learning objectives through the teachers' effective use of well-chosen resources and varied activities. However, planning for pupils of different musical abilities is not always sufficiently well focused. Assessment is used well during lessons to check and reinforce pupils' knowledge and understanding and then to help them improve their compositions, for instance. Pupils behave well and enjoy their lessons as a result of lively teaching, good relationships and active music-making.
115. Leadership and management are very good. The head of department has a clear sense of direction and drive for improvement. Teachers work together very effectively as a team. The department's performance is reviewed regularly. Effective procedures are in place for collating assessment information but are not yet fully developed to ensure that pupils in Years 7 to 9 understand the National Curriculum levels. Provision for the use of ICT and for developing pupils' knowledge and understanding of the music of different cultures are limited within the planned curriculum. The department contributes very effectively to pupils' personal development and to the further development of their musical learning through an extensive range of extra-curricular activities and performance opportunities in college and in the local community, involving large numbers of pupils. The music department is a hive of activity at breaks and lunchtimes.
116. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good. There has been some improvement in the use of ICT by pupils. However, the department is still unable to meet National Curriculum requirements fully and to enhance pupils' composing and performing skills in all years because of inadequate music ICT resources. Significant progress has been made with developing singing.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **very good**.

MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- The great majority of pupils achieve well by the end of Year 9 and very well by the end of Year 10 in the compulsory course and by the end of Year 11 in the GCSE course.
- Very good quality teaching and learning result in very good progress for all groups of pupils, particularly in Years 10 and 11.
- There is insufficient use of ICT to support pupils' learning in both the compulsory and examination courses.
- Very good leadership provides a purposeful focus, ethos and direction for the subject.
- The very good attitudes and behaviour of pupils result in a very positive atmosphere in lessons and extra-curricular activities.
- Very good extra-curricular provision throughout the year extends pupils' learning experiences and personal development.

COMMENTARY

117. Standards in Year 9 are average. The majority achieve well in relation to their varied capabilities on entry. In striking games, boys are developing their skills well in both cricket and rounders. In cricket, the more capable have good all-round basic skills and some have particularly good batting techniques, using a variety of strokes to both off- and on-side. However, fielding skills in both activities are less secure for some, particularly in terms of accuracy of throwing, support play and in the use of the long barrier in fielding. In track athletics, girls are developing the quality of their running technique in the 200 metres event. The more capable pace themselves well but the less capable do not use their arms well enough. In the shot putt, the more capable use movement into the shot well and, as a result, are able to improve the distances they throw. A significant minority, however, need to ensure the shot comes from the side of the neck.
118. Standards in the Year 10 compulsory course are above national age-related expectations. The majority achieve very well and have continued to build on the skills and techniques learned in Years 7 to 9. In rounders, the more capable boys strike and field the ball very well. Teamwork skills are developing well and pupils confidently discuss and analyse tactics both in terms of their own team's performance and the tactics being used by the opposition. The less capable, though achieving well, still find difficulty in developing a variety of strokes in cricket and the accuracy of their throwing could be better. In track athletics, the more capable girls have a good understanding of the importance of effective and efficient baton-changing in sprint relay races. They are improving their techniques by using different changeover methods. In dance, the less capable accept very well the responsibility they have been given. In the absence of their dance teacher, an enthusiastic pupil leads and models well. Pupils cope well with the physical challenge on offer but are not developing sufficiently well their evaluative skills or the breadth of their knowledge and understanding of dance techniques. Across all years, pupils have developed well their understanding of the principles and procedures for warm-up but, on occasion, the quality of their exercises is not good enough.
119. The proportion of pupils attaining A* to C grade passes in the GCSE course has risen over the past three years and in 2003 was high. Compared to many other subjects, pupils performed very well. Estimated grades for the current, much larger, Year 11 group suggest a similar pass rate to that of 2003. A scrutiny of a sample of Year 10 pupils' work shows that they are achieving very well in their theory lessons.
120. Overall, teaching and learning are very good and result in very good progress. Teachers have a very good command of the activities being taught and have a very consistent approach as regards behaviour and discipline. Lessons are well structured, purposeful and provide progression and challenge. In Years 7 and 8 cricket lessons, for example, well-planned and structured activities ensured that pupils were all actively involved and improving their skills and techniques very well. Learning objectives are made clear at the start of lessons so that pupils know what is expected of them. Attitudes and behaviour are very good and pupils work very well together in pairs and small groups. They clearly respect the ethos within which the subject is taught, which enhances the quality of learning and promotes a very good atmosphere in lessons.
121. Very effective use of questioning by teachers enhances pupils' speaking and listening skills and enables teachers to gauge the level of their understanding. In Year 10 rounders and track athletics' lessons, this was particularly effective and, as a result, pupils were learning very well. Teachers circulate very well in lessons and their effective use of praise

and constructive criticism makes pupils well aware of their capabilities. There are, however, occasions when there could be more pupil evaluation of their peers - this would help them refine and develop their own practice and deepen their knowledge and understanding even further. Though the department has some hardware available, there is generally insufficient use of ICT to support pupils' learning in the subject. Assessment in Years 7 to 9 focuses very well on the four strands of the physical education National Curriculum but moderation of these at the end of Year 9 needs further refinement. Very good quality marking of pupils' GCSE theory work ensures that they know what they have to do to make further improvements.

122. Very good leadership provides a purposeful focus and direction for the subject in order to improve standards even further. Good practice is shared within the department and the breadth of the curriculum has been improved. There is a strong team ethos and a shared commitment to improving provision. Management is good. New schemes of work, which include reference to the basic skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT, are being developed to help teachers plan their lessons. Assessment procedures for the compulsory course, focusing on the four strands of the physical education National Curriculum, have been extended into Years 10 and 11 but are not reported.

123. A very good range of extra-curricular provision throughout the year, including both recreational and competitive fixtures, extends pupils' learning opportunities. As a result of the commitment of the physical education teachers, pupils have attained representative honours at district and county levels in a range of activities and teams have had success in various competitions. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

CITIZENSHIP

Provision in citizenship is **very good**.

MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- There are excellent opportunities for pupils to participate in the life of the college and in the wider community.
- Leadership and management of citizenship are very good.
- The subject makes an excellent contribution to the personal development of all pupils.
- The quality of teaching and learning is very good.
- There are limited opportunities for pupils to develop their written work in depth.
- The marking of pupils' work lacks detailed advice on how to improve.

COMMENTARY

124. In lessons seen and work analysed during the inspection, standards are above expectations in all year groups and pupils achieve well. They understand their rights and responsibilities within society and develop skills of enquiry and communication very well through debate and discussion. This was seen to very good effect in a Year 7 lesson in which pupils discussed, with considerable maturity, different concepts of community and how change can be effected in the local arena. Most pupils are also able to analyse issues and justify their opinions in writing, but there are limited opportunities for them at

present to write in depth. There are excellent opportunities for pupils to participate and take responsible action, both within the college and in the wider community. The college council is a highly effective body and its members participate fully in the life of the college, including the appointment of new staff. In addition, older pupils act as very effective buddies and mentors to their younger counterparts and have provided advice to other schools in this area.

125. The quality of teaching is very good. All lessons have very clear aims and objectives that are discussed fully with pupils and teachers use classroom management skills to very good effect in order to stimulate pupils' learning. Lessons are conducted at a brisk pace and there is a very strong emphasis on pupil participation in lessons. As a result, all pupils show very positive attitudes towards the subject and are eager to air their opinions in class.
126. The subject is led and managed very well. There is a fully co-ordinated programme for citizenship throughout the college and there are very clear plans in place for assessing, recording and reporting the subject at the end of Year 9. At present, however, marking is limited in range and pupils would benefit from clearer advice on how to improve their written work. Other curriculum subjects, most especially history, religious education and English, identify clearly citizenship opportunities within their schemes of work. There is, however, a lack of consistency in this area. Citizenship makes an excellent contribution to the personal development of all pupils, particularly in respect of moral and social education.
127. Overall, citizenship is poised to become a considerable strength in the college since its recent introduction. There are very clear plans for further development and there is a strong and dedicated team in place to carry them out.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

Inspection judgement

Grade

The overall effectiveness of the school	2
How inclusive the school is	2
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	3
Value for money provided by the school	2

Overall standards achieved	2
Pupils' achievement	2

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	2
Attendance	4
Attitudes	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

The quality of education provided by the school	2
The quality of teaching	2
How well pupils learn	2
The quality of assessment	3
How well the curriculum meets pupils' needs	2
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	2
Accommodation and resources	3
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	2
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	2
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	2
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	2
The quality of the school's links with the community	1
The school's links with other schools and colleges	2

The leadership and management of the school	2
The governance of the school	2
The leadership of the headteacher	2
The leadership of other key staff	2
The effectiveness of management	2

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