

INSPECTION REPORT

Oakmead College of Technology

LEA area: Bournemouth

Unique reference number: 113881

Headteacher: Dr Annetta Minard

Lead inspector: Mrs Susan Chamberlain

Dates of inspection: 14th – 18th March 2005

Inspection number: 268869

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE COLLEGE

Type of college:	Technology College
College category:	Community
Age range of students:	11 to 18
Gender of students:	Mixed
Number on roll;	1286
College address:	Duck Lane Bournemouth Dorset
Postcode:	BH11 9JJ
Telephone number:	01202 774600
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Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Tina Waterman
Date of previous inspection:	10 May 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE COLLEGE

Oakmead is a designated College of Technology; it is a mixed college in a fully selective area with 1300 students in the 11 to 18 range on roll; it is bigger than most secondary colleges. The college has a high proportion of students (23.1 per cent) with special educational needs; 0.7 per cent that have statements. There is a wide range of needs, including hearing impairment, autism, emotional, behavioural and social difficulties but the vast majority of students with special educational needs have literacy difficulties. There is a special section for disaffected students at risk of permanent exclusion and an exciting partnership with a neighbouring special school which enables students from that school to access a plumbing course. Broadly average numbers of students take a free school meal. A small proportion of students are from ethnic minorities. Only a very low number have English as an additional language. There is not much movement in and out of the college other than at first admission and usual time of leaving, although some leave to go to local grammar schools. Students enter the college with standards that, when averaged out, are well below national norms. The college has a Sportmark, a Schools Achievement Award, a Healthy Schools Award and is an Investors in People organisation.

The sixth form is smaller than most with about 150 students on roll. It is growing in size. There are fewer females than males at a ratio of three to two. Just over a third of Year 11 students move into the sixth form and a few students come from local schools or further a field. Attainment on entry to the sixth form is below average overall.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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9062	Helen Barter	Lay inspector	
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32655	Mike Bostock	Team inspector	Information and Communication Technology
21954	Terry Chipp	Team inspector	Art and Design
21806	Pat Swinnerton	Team inspector	Design and Technology
16930	Jeff Plumb	Team inspector	Geography, Special Educational Needs
12825	Niall Carr	Team inspector	History, Work Related Learning, Psychology, Sociology
4749	Martin Ash	Team inspector	Modern Foreign Languages
12475	Stuart Johnson	Team inspector	Music
14446	Barry Simmons	Team inspector	Physical Education
18275	Chrissie Pitman	Team inspector	Citizenship
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a good college with some very good features. Students receive a good quality of education underscored by the high value the college attributes to the individual. The college seeks to enable students to fulfil their potential by offering them suitable courses which do not always follow a traditional examination route, for example the plumbing course. The college is well known for its capacity to help students with learning and behavioural difficulties. It provides good value for money.

The college's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Leadership by the headteacher is excellent; she has a clear purpose which she pursues with resolve.
- The college makes an excellent attempt to include all students including those from a local special educational needs school. Such provision makes a valuable contribution to the self-esteem, confidence and academic achievement of all students.
- The provision for students with special educational needs is very good.
- Teaching and learning are good; assessment is used very well to respond to individuals needs enabling students to understand how they can improve.
- The curriculum is very good and innovative, as are the opportunities for enrichment; work related learning opportunities are very good.
- Students are cared for very well; they are offered very good advice and guidance. As a consequence they achieve well.
- Numeracy is underdeveloped across the curriculum.
- Citizenship is insufficiently embedded across all areas of the curriculum.
- There is significant challenging behaviour by a minority of students, mainly boys.

Improvement since the last inspection

Improvement since the previous inspection is good. Management has improved as has teaching and learning. The provision for students with special educational needs has improved; individual education plans are better. Literacy standards are better. Achievement, particularly in reading and spelling for students with learning difficulties, has much improved. The curriculum has been greatly extended, shaped around the needs of individual students. As a consequence, students with challenging behaviour are much more focused on learning and the vast majority achieve well. There have been significant gains in dance, physical education, design and technology, art and religious education.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Students' achievement, including that of those with special educational needs, that of those with English as an additional language and that of those who are gifted and talented is **good**. Students achieve very well in technology subjects. In Years 7 to 9, attainment in the work seen is above national expectations in drama, art, modern foreign languages and physical education. Students' competence in information and communication technology is above expectation; in mathematics and English it is below expectations. Overall, attainment is below expectations but shows gradual and sustained improvement as students move through the college.

Year 11 and 13 results

Performance compared with:		all colleges			similar colleges
		2002	2003]	2004	2004
Year 11	GCSE/GNVQ examinations	D	E	E	C
Year 13	A/AS level and VCE examinations	E*	E	E*	

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

Students' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good. Their attitudes to college and their behaviour are good. Attendance and punctuality are satisfactory. Students in the sixth form have good attitudes and behave very well. Their attendance is satisfactory although monitoring procedures require improvement.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The college provides a **good** quality of education. Teaching and learning are **good**. Teachers try very hard to produce lessons that are interesting and suitable to the many different needs of the students. Assessment procedures are **very good**; they enable students to understand how they can improve. The college provides a **very good** curriculum with **equally strong** enrichment opportunities. Provision for students' care, welfare, health and safety is **very good**. They are provided with **very good** support, advice and guidance. The way in which the college listens to and values students' views is **very good**. The college has **good** links with parents. Links with the community are **good**. There are **very good** links with schools and other colleges.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are **very effective** with leadership by the headteacher **excellent**. Emphasising teaching and learning, the senior leadership group offers the headteacher **very good** support. A considerable change in middle management has meant that a number of subject leaders are relatively new. However, management is effective and provides **good** support to the senior leadership group. Governance is **very good**. Governors are **very well** led.

PARENTS' AND STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE COLLEGE

Parents' views are predominantly **positive**. Most parents support the college's work and feel that their children make good progress as a result of good teaching and expectations for students to do well. They have concerns about the behaviour of some students. Students like the college and have positive attitudes to their learning; they enjoy all the college activities provided for them.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Improve levels of numeracy in the college by:
Appointing a numeracy co-ordinator
Including numeracy within subject schemes of work and other documentation.
- Ensure that citizenship is embedded within all subjects and that it is clearly identified and assessed where it occurs
- Continue to seek ways to improve the challenging behaviour exhibited by a small but significant minority of students, mainly boys.

and, to meet statutory requirements by:

- providing a daily, collective act of worship for all students.

SIXTH FORM AT OAKMEAD COLLEGE OF TECHNOLOGY

OVERALL EVALUATION

A good range of GCE AS-level, A-level and vocational courses are offered in this sixth form of 150 students.

The overall effectiveness of the sixth form is good. In the work seen standards were average. In 2003 and 2004, the number of students who took many courses was too low for statistical comparison. For those that could be compared grade quality was average. Some were below average. There is notable added value in many of the results obtained when compared with students' prior attainment. Oakmead Sixth Form Centre provides a good standard of education for its students. It is cost-effective and provides good value for money. It has many good features and deserves its emerging good reputation in the community. Virtually all students progress to employment or into higher education. Teaching is good. Most students learn in an appropriately adult way. The sixth form is managed well. It runs effectively. The current arrangement with a nearby college serves students well.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Leadership is very good.
- Teaching is good.
- Although results in the 2004 examinations were average or above average, they were below in a number of subjects and there was some underachievement amongst middle-attaining students.
- Guidance and pastoral care are good and have a clear influence on students' success. Consequently, students have positive attitudes to their studies which contribute to their maturity, confidence and personal development.
- Curricular provision is very good; it includes interesting subjects like film studies, dance, performance arts and drama; enrichment opportunities are very good
- Computers are not used sufficiently to enhance learning in lessons in a number of subjects.
- Procedures for recording attendance accurately Years 12 and 13 are inadequate.
- Religious education does not receive sufficient time.

QUALITY AND STANDARDS IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES OF THE CURRICULUM

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

Curriculum area	Evaluation
English, languages and communication	Provision is satisfactory . Teaching is good as is the learning. Standards are below average at the end of the A2 course. The curriculum is well managed.
Mathematics	Provision is satisfactory . Teaching and learning are very good in the A level courses, teachers have thorough subject knowledge and use innovative methods.
Information and communication technology	Provision is good . Teaching is good. The subject is well resourced. Weaker students are well supported. Standards are good in relation to prior attainment.
Product design	Provision is good . Students are achieving well. Teaching and learning are good. The subject is well led and managed. Standards are average.
Art and design	Provision is good . The new A level course is well taught and students are achieving well. Standards attained are well above average.
Business	Provision is good . The teaching is good as is the learning. The teachers' knowledge is a strength. Students need more contact with business to widen their learning. Attendance is variable and hindering achievement.
Psychology	Provision is satisfactory . Teaching is good with well planned methodology. Good planning and resources are provided and positive relationships help students to achieve well. Retention rates are good.
Sociology	Provision is satisfactory . Teaching is good overall. There are inconsistencies in the examination results attained. Students are not achieving their potential. Students are growing in confidence to develop their ideas on social change.
Physical Education	Provision is very good . Highly motivated and enthusiastic students respond very positively to high quality teaching. Overall attainment is in line with national averages.
Health and social care	Provision is good . Teaching and learning are good. Standards overall are satisfactory. The curriculum matches the needs of all students.
Media studies	Provision is good . Teaching and learning are good. Subject knowledge is a strength. Attainment is above average.

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

ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

The good guidance and support, including careers advice and guidance on further and higher education enables all students to move successfully into employment, training or higher education. Relationships between teachers and students are good and build trust and confidence that are essential to promote success. Attendance and punctuality are satisfactory. The arrangements for recruitment and transfer to the sixth form are broadly good. The sixth form centre has adequate ICT resources and quiet areas to promote some independence of learning.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

Leadership and management of the sixth form are very good. There is a strong commitment to promoting equal opportunities by providing a rich and extensive curriculum to meet the needs and aspirations of all students. There is a clear vision of future development. It includes improving

achievement and results. However, although examination results are analysed thoroughly, the use of target setting for sixth form subjects is inconsistent. Therefore, the effective checking of departmental performance during the year lacks rigour and does not ensure the highest possible standards and achievement. Curriculum leadership is very good and management of subjects is good.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Students find teaching to be sound or good overall and say that teachers help them to improve and achieve well. The range of enrichment activities and planned personal development was felt to be effective in widening their experiences. Despite a few negative responses, discussions with students indicated that personal advice was available. Advice on sixth form courses and guidance on careers are both given good ratings. Inspectors judge that these aspects, taken collectively with other evidence, represent good provision for these students.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Students' achievement, including that of those with special educational needs, English as an additional language and gifted and talented, is good. Attainment in the work seen is below expectations but shows gradual and sustained improvement as students move through the college.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Published figures do not necessarily accurately represent the college's unique circumstances.
- Students achieve very well in technology subjects.
- Students' competence in information and communication technology is good.
- In Years 10 and 11, attainment is above national expectations in drama, art, modern foreign languages and physical education.

Commentary

1 This college has unique circumstances, which make it difficult to compare with similar colleges; it is unlikely that there are more than a couple of colleges with a similar set of characteristics. For example, in some year groups, there are up to 50 per cent more boys than girls; the number of students who start in Year 7 changes when some more able students pass interim examinations to enter local grammar schools. Consequently the strongest academic year in main college is likely to be Year 7. Prior to these considerations is the fact that at least 15 per cent of most able students pass for local grammar schools anyway and never enter the college. Added to all these ambiguities, local single sexed schools are inclined to attract girls, parents not appreciating either the predominantly boy population or the technology status of Oakmead. In national terms, therefore, results measured at the end of Years 9 and 11 are extremely unlikely to give an accurate picture of what is really happening. Inspection statistics confirm this anomaly.

2. During the inspection, having watched many lessons and looked at a considerable amount of past and present work, work was found to be below average across the college but students made good progress, although their good achievement did not alter the overall standard grade. The long, and growing increasingly longer, tail of students with special educational needs or behavioural problems does not help the college to improve results.

3. In Years 7 to 9, students' achievement is very good in design and technology and good in other subjects. In the work seen, standards were below national expectations in English, mathematics, science and modern foreign languages but in line with these in art, design and technology, geography, history, information and communication technology, music, religious education, physical education. Clearly students respond best to practical and creative subjects.

4. In Years 10 and 11, students' achievement is very good in design and technology and good in other subjects. In the work seen, standards are above average in drama, art, modern foreign languages and physical education. They are below average in English, mathematics, science but in line with expectations in all other subjects. Clear signs of improvement are evident. The shift from Years 7 to 9 to Years 10 and 11 is positive although the strengths are not always in the same areas.

5. Students show below average literacy and language skills across the college, having entered the college with, when averaged out, well below average levels. In mathematics, students' competence is again below average. Information and communication technology, however, is better. Students have a good competence in this though out the college.

6. Students with English as an additional language and those who are gifted and talented are provided for well and achieve well, just as other groups do.

7. Achievement for students with special educational needs in English, mathematics and science is good. Across all other subjects, achievement for students is good except for in design and technology where it is very good and citizenship where it is satisfactory. This good achievement reflects teachers' good planning.

8. Students with reading and spelling difficulties achieve well because of the successful implementation of a commercial and intensive programme of support delivered by the learning support teachers. Students with statements for additional and more complex needs achieve very well in relation to their primary needs. Students with severe and profound hearing impairment gain in confidence as communicators and their achievement in English and mathematics is very good because of the quality of support they receive from their teachers and teaching assistants with expertise in working with them. Students with autism have developed strategies for working with other students and for managing some very difficult needs-related behaviour because of the targeted, patient and sensitive support they have receive from skilled teachers and teaching assistants. In the nurture groups, students with learning and behavioural difficulties achieve very well, as evidenced in geography and mathematics, because the teaching with visual cues and activities that are challenging as well as being fun is well targeted to meet their needs. Students who are disaffected, often with poor literacy skills, and low self-esteem achieve very well because of the innovative and creative curriculum programmes available to them – including work related programmes. Students from a local special school are fully included with their mainstream peers and achieve very well in developing plumbing skills.

Key Stage 3

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 9 – average point scores in 2004

Standards in:	College results	National results
English	31.1 (32.6)	n/a (33.4)
Mathematics	32.4 (32.3)	n/a (35.4)
Science	30.9 (31.5)	n/a (33.6)

There were [n/a] students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

Key Stage 4

Standards in GCSE/GNVQ examinations at the end of Year 11 in 2004

	College results	National results
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	34 (31)	52 (52)
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	77 (83)	89 (88)
Percentage of students gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	93 (95)	96 (96)
Average point score per student (best eight subjects)	29.9 (28.7)	41.4 (40.6)

There were 229 students in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

Sixth form

9. Attainment at the start of the sixth form is below average overall. In Year 13, standards have improved in some areas to average. Learning is, therefore, effective and achievement is, broadly, good. Overall, current standards of work are average and similar to previous years. They reflect

satisfactory or better achievement by students in response to predominantly good teaching and the generally positive attitudes that students have to their learning.

10. Results in Year 12 AS-level examinations were average or above average in 2004. The results in Year 13 A2 and other examinations were at least average.

Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Students' attitudes to college and their behaviour are good. Attendance and punctuality are satisfactory. Students in the sixth form have good attitudes and behave very well. Their attendance is satisfactory although monitoring procedures require improvement.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students like the college and have positive attitudes to their learning. Most behave well but a significant minority of students disrupt lessons with their unsatisfactory behaviour.
- The support for students with extreme and challenging behaviour through the Alternative Education Programme is very good.
- Strategies to support students who are experiencing bullying are very good.
- Students have a good and well-developed sense of moral and social responsibility.
- Procedures for monitoring unexplained absences are insufficiently rigorous in the sixth form.
- In the sixth form, procedures for recording attendance are inadequate.

Commentary

11. Most students have good attitudes to their work and enjoy all the college activities provided for them. This is reflected in their good achievement and personal development. Students respond very well to interesting, challenging lessons that set high expectations for their work and behaviour. Students participate very well in the wide range of extra-curricular activities available to them. Most students think that this is a good college to be at and particularly appreciate the good and supportive relationships they have with staff.

12. Students' behaviour is good. They know the college's rules and follow them. The atmosphere around college is generally calm and good-humoured. In lessons, most students are attentive, respond positively to teachers and behave well. However, there is a significant group of students, particularly in Year 8, whose low-level disruptive behaviour in the classroom hinders teaching and other students' learning. Students say that they find this annoying particularly when it happens in several lessons in one day. Parents are also concerned about some students' behaviour and the effect this has on other students' learning. Inspectors find that these views are justified.

13. Through the Alternative Education Programme, the college makes very good provision to include and support students with extremely challenging behaviour. Students are set clear rules for participation in this programme and understand that lapses in behaviour will preclude them from planned activities. In their evaluations, parents are very pleased with the improvement in their children's behaviour in college, and often at home. As a consequence of this provision, the rate of exclusions is very low. It reflects the college's excellent commitment to inclusion.

14. The college takes bullying seriously and provides very good support, through the Restorative Approach In the School Environment (RAISE) programme, for students who have friendship problems or who are upset. Students value highly this facility as a place to go to talk through concerns with an adult and to seek support to resolve issues through mediation. They say that it is particularly effective because issues are dealt with immediately and effectively. Trained peer mediators in Year 7 give good support to other students and encourage them to seek support from RAISE to resolve their problems.

15. Students' personal qualities are good overall. They develop personal, including religious beliefs, and appreciate that others have beliefs on which they base their lives. Well-planned

assemblies give students good opportunities to reflect on issues such as the consequences of scientific development. Most students can separate right from wrong and know the codes and conventions for conduct in college and the community. In lessons, tutorials and circle time they express personal opinions about a variety of issues and problems. They are able to take responsibility well, for example as buddies to younger students and as members of college councils. Students' cultural development is promoted satisfactorily through the subjects of the curriculum and through celebration of different faiths and festivals in religious education and assemblies. Students' spiritual development has improved since the last inspection although the college continues to fail to provide a daily act of collective worship.

16. Those students with complex behavioural difficulties are kept on task and behave very well in most lessons because teaching assistants work in an effective partnership with teachers to meet their needs. Skilful use is made of the behavioural targets on individual education plans when working with these students. The nurture groups in Years 7 to 9 are very successful in meeting the behavioural and learning needs of students and also very vulnerable students. In these groups, taught by specialist teachers, students make rapid gains in managing their own behaviour which in turn results in improved learning. Those students with a lack of social imagination (on the autistic spectrum) who fail to fully understand the impact of their behaviour on others are particularly well managed and are fully included in lessons.

17. Students from a neighbouring special school, who are included in the plumbing course, are very keen to learn and make rapid gains in confidence and independence as a result of mixing with their peers in integrated mainstream classes. Students in Years 10 and 11, who visit another local special school as part of the Duke of Edinburgh award grow in confidence as they feel valued in the support they give in that school. Inclusion opportunities are very good.

18. In main college, students' attendance is satisfactory. There are good measures to monitor absences and to promote attendance. The education welfare officer supports students very well and works effectively with the college to improve its attendance procedures. Current attendance figures show that the college is likely to meet the local authority's target set for it. Work still needs to be done to reduce the large number of authorised absences, many of which are caused by term-time holidays, and to ensure that attendance in lessons is accurately recorded. Most students are punctual in the morning and to lessons.

Sixth Form

19. The sixth form is very popular and expanding. Students' learn in an adult way and they want to achieve well. Their behaviour is very good and sets a good example to other students in the college. Students value the opportunities and range of courses offered to them, which enable them to continue their education beyond statutory college age. They like having their own facilities and the chance to undertake additional activities such as sport and performances. They particularly appreciate the good friendships that they have with each other and the mature way in which they are treated by staff. In their questionnaires, several reported that they were completely satisfied with the sixth form.

20. Students' attendance is satisfactory although some were missing from a number of lessons observed during the inspection. Procedures for monitoring unexplained absences are insufficiently rigorous to ensure that the college has complete, accurate records of students' attendance at lessons.

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence	
College data:	8.6
National data:	6.9

Unauthorised absence	
College data :	1.3
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 students

Categories used in the Annual College Census
White – British
White – any other White background
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean
Mixed – any other mixed background
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background
Black or Black British – African
Chinese
No ethnic group recorded

Exclusions in the last college year

No of students on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
1250	3	0
9		
1		
3		
3		
1		
4		
1		
14		

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

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE COLLEGE

The quality of education provided by the college is good. Teaching and learning are good; most lessons are good or better. Assessment is very good. The quality of the curriculum is very good as are enrichment activities. There is a satisfactory personal and social education programme. The college has a very good mentoring programme which supports this. Arrangements for students' care, welfare and health and safety are very good. Links with parents are good.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are good. Assessment is very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have a productive relationship with their students.
- Teachers plan their lessons well. Although many lessons include a citizenship component, this is not always so well planned.
- In the majority of lessons the work is well matched to the different needs within the class.
- Low level disruption and a lack of listening skills are characteristics of unsatisfactory lessons.
- Teaching assistants make a good contribution to students' learning.

Commentary

21. Teaching and learning are good and have improved since the last inspection; unsatisfactory lessons are rare and occur predominately in Year 8. In over three quarters of lessons, teaching was good or better. The fact that Year 10 were on work experience may have affected these figures either positively or negatively.

22. Excellent teaching was seen in four lessons, one in physical education, one in dance, one in science and one in design and technology. Characteristics of these lessons include exemplary classroom management, inspirational and enthusiastic learning and an excellent use of resources. In excellent lessons, students are encouraged to learn independently; they may use ICT very well to evaluate their work at the end of the lesson. Teachers' expectations are very high and students are keen to rise to the occasion. In a dance lesson, for example, there was a buzz about the room, as students anticipated that something special was going to happen. In these lessons, attendance is high. Planning is meticulous; objectives are crystal clear. In very good lessons, teachers have a productive relationship with the class. They give students clear briefings prior to a task. The work is very well matched to the different groups within the class. Resource materials are always very well produced documents.

23. In good and satisfactory lessons, teachers' knowledge is always secure; their planning is well structured and their expositions detailed and helpful. Students learn to express themselves fully, accurately and with understanding, as a result of teachers' skilful questioning techniques. Students learn how to structure their ideas in logical, sequential and coherent forms. Teacher assistants support teachers and students well. Many lessons contain a "citizenship" contribution. This is not always planned so well.

24. In the rare unsatisfactory lessons, the attitudes to learning of a few students are poorly developed. These students can be disruptive; they do not listen to instruction; they expect the teacher to help them even if they have not listened; they take no responsibility for their own learning. Some lessons start late; students can be defiant; they might swing back on their chairs or sit in a rude manner. Teachers fail to control such disruptive behaviour. Most unsatisfactory lessons occur in Year 8, where a small, but significant number of students, mainly boys, present particularly challenging behaviour.

25. The college's attempt to meet the learning needs of the individual means that some students are withdrawn from class for activities appropriate to their need. This works well in as much as these students make progress in terms of say, literacy, but breaks continuity in their learning in the subject from which they are withdrawn.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 166 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
4 (2.5%)	44 (27.0%)	87 (52.0%)	28 (17.0%)	3 (1.5%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

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

26. The quality of teaching and learning for students with special educational needs is good. At its best teaching is characterised by flexible planning and interesting activities to motivate learning. Effective teaching assistant support makes a valuable contribution to the good learning. Those students with more complex special educational needs are very well taught. Overall, effective use is made of individual education plans to support the teaching of students with learning difficulties across the college but there is some inconsistency of practice.

Assessment

27. Procedures for assessment are very good. The college has very good procedures for compiling and analysing students' assessment data from a wide range of sources. Students' progress is monitored across all subjects and reported to parents every six weeks. Data is used effectively to identify under-achieving students for support and to recognise the achievement of successful students. The computerised system is very effective in setting appropriate targets for students at all levels. More staff training is required to enable all staff to access and use the information as the system develops and becomes more complex. Within subjects procedures for assessment are generally good and occasionally very good. Work is marked regularly and accurately against national curriculum or examination criteria. Students take an active part in assessing their own work and are aware of their strengths and weaknesses.

28. Procedures for identifying students with special educational needs are very good. Their progress over time is monitored rigorously. Data gained from this exercise is very well used to inform planning to raise their achievement.

Sixth form

29. Teaching in the sixth form is good overall. It is very good in a few lessons. Students learn well and can work independently. In a small minority of lessons teaching lacked flair and failed to engage students at the level expected in a sixth form lesson. Teachers know their subjects well and share their enjoyment of them with students. Lessons are thoroughly planned to take account of learning needs and the examinations that have to be sat. Teachers are effective in their support for students. Marking and assessment are mostly satisfactory. ICT is not used sufficiently to support learning.

The curriculum

The college provides a very good curriculum and very good enrichment opportunities.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum is innovative and very well matched to the needs of the students.
- The provision for students with special needs is very good.
- There are very good opportunities for enrichment of the curriculum.
- The level of participation in sport is very high.

Commentary

30. The curriculum has been significantly improved since the last inspection and is now very good. Students in Years 7 to 9 study all the National Curriculum subjects and also dance and drama as separate subjects. There is a modular approach, which is common to all subjects, and this ensures a very good level of consistency in assessment and information to students and parents. There are special classes in English and maths for those students entering on the lower National Curriculum levels. Other effective curriculum strategies to help the lower attaining students include the "Success Maker" programme and a special "Nurture Group" for selected students. In Years 10 and 11, all National Curriculum subjects are studied and there is a full range of options available. At present there is no opportunity in technology to study textiles but a course is now on offer for next year. There is a strong emphasis on work related learning, some of which is innovative such as the Young Apprenticeship project and the plumbing courses. Students also have the option of taking part in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme as part of the curriculum combined with extra-curricular work. The college has good links with local industry and the needs of the community are well considered. For example the college offers a GCSE course in catering as well as the more usual food technology course. Students have the opportunity to take GCSE one year earlier than usual in the humanities, enabling some students to take extra subjects. There are very good opportunities for students to enrich the curriculum. In most subjects there are good

opportunities for learning outside the college day through booster and revision classes and homework clubs. Master classes are held in many subjects for gifted and talented students. The level of participation in sports is very high and there is a good level of participation in the arts and the wide range of clubs and other activities.

31. There are sufficient teachers with appropriate qualifications and experience to satisfactorily meet the demands of the curriculum. The match of support staff to the curriculum is very good. Although the long term absence of staff is an issue for several departments, the effect on students' learning is minimised by effective management. The quality of resources for learning is satisfactory with sufficient to meet the demands of the curriculum. Books are of recent issue and are relevant to the courses offered. In keeping with its technology status the college now has a much increased number of computers and interactive whiteboards which are being well used and are having a very positive effect on students' attainment. The learning resource centre is very good. It is well used both in lesson time and for private study. The two members of the library staff ensure that the fullest possible use is made of the facilities on offer. Accommodation is satisfactory to meet the needs of the curriculum. Where subject rooms are grouped together accommodation is of better quality. However, for some subjects, particularly geography, rooms are separated and staff have to carry resources from one area to another. Although some areas are showing signs of wear, generally the buildings and grounds are clean and well maintained. Accommodation for the sixth form is satisfactory for the current number of students attending.

32. Provision for gifted and talented students is good and these students achieve well. Very good initiatives are being developed through accelerated learning groups and a programme of subject master classes often involving visiting specialists. Within subjects, however, provision is uneven. The Aim Higher programme is raising students' aspirations through an effective scheme where students are paired with carefully chosen mentors from higher education. The co-ordinator is relatively new to the role but is well organised and has developed a clear and manageable action plan. Activities and outcomes are effectively recorded but evaluation has yet to take place.

33. The few students who have English as an additional language are provided for sufficiently. The inclusive nature of the college ensures that individual needs are met.

34. The curriculum for students with special educational needs is very good. Innovative and creative curriculum models ensure a range of successful pathways for these students. The alternative curriculum packages are very good. The package which enables students to take 5 GCSEs, develop personal skills through an exciting Duke of Edinburgh provision, and gain regular and relevant work experience is very successful. The programme keeps students at risk of permanent exclusion at college and enables them to be well equipped for the workplace. Tailored programmes in nurture groups enable students in Years 7 to 9 to develop good basic literacy and numeracy skills. Anger management training and social skills development programmes, including the use of social stories (as part of an emotional literacy programme), successfully build the confidence and self-esteem of students with behavioural difficulties.

Care, guidance and support

Provision for students' care, welfare, health and safety is very good. They are provided with very good support, advice and guidance. The way in which the college listens to and values students' views is very good. Sixth form students receive very good advice and guidance and are fully involved in the life of the college.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The college works hard to help and care for students of all backgrounds.
- The care for students with special educational needs or challenging behaviour is very good.
- The support and guidance given to students through the mentoring scheme is very good.
- Guidance given to students at key points through their college careers is good. Good induction into the sixth form is helping students to settle quickly.

- In the sixth form, good internal advice and guidance is supporting student aspirations.
- Teachers have good open relationships with students which is helping them both before and during their time in the sixth form.

Commentary

35. The college makes very good provision for students' care and welfare, including arrangements for health and safety, child protection and supporting students in public care. Staff are very knowledgeable about students' particular needs and difficulties both in and out of college and understand the effect that these might have on their achievement and personal development. There is a high commitment to inclusion and to supporting students whose challenging behaviour or disaffection is likely to result in them not completing their statutory education. There are very good links with families and outside agencies by staff and by the college's education welfare officer. Parents find it easy to approach the college with any concerns. They particularly appreciate the effective way that the college deals with bullying through the RAISE project and say that their children are well supported by staff and by student 'buddies'.

36. The care for students with special educational needs is very good. The college has established very good relationships with external agencies for these students. The quality of advice and support for students with hearing impairment is very good and the college successfully accesses specialist equipment for individual students, for example the sloping board and a laptop for a student with cerebral palsy. Outreach support from the advanced skills teacher for inclusion from a local special school is very good and benefits a large number of these students. The college's educational psychologist is used imaginatively to develop students' social skills and to support those with challenging behaviour in developing anger management strategies. Literacy support from the local educational authority literacy support team is good. Protocols and procedures for students on medication are good.

37. Career guidance for students with learning difficulties is good. These students are Priority 1 customers within the system of support given by Connexions.

38. The care and guidance given to students in the Alternative Education Programme, either in college or through home tutors, is very good and highly valued by all involved.

39. Students have very good relationships with staff and find them approachable and friendly. They appreciate the support given to them by teachers and mentors in lessons, through extra study support and by being available for individual discussion about their work. The mentoring process is very effective because students receive individual and regular reviews of their progress and clear targets are set for them to improve their work, attendance and behaviour. It gives them very good opportunities to discuss any concerns or views they may have about their work or lives at college. Students are confident that their views are also listened to through the year and college councils and that their ideas, for example for fundraising, are taken seriously.

40. Induction arrangements for students joining the college are good and well established through the college's strong links with primary schools. The college is aware that some Year 7 students have difficulty settling in its large environment and works closely with parents to ensure that any problems are dealt with within the first few weeks of students starting at college. Students also receive good guidance at important decision making times. Guidance on options in Year 9, for students' future placements at colleges and universities and for employment is good.

Sixth form

41. The quality of support, advice and guidance offered to students in the sixth form is very good. Students are very positive about the sixth form and the way in which teachers are available to help them with their work and listen to their concerns. Students receive good guidance on career and work options after they leave college. As a result, nearly all students progress to employment or into higher education. Relationships between students and with staff are very good and a feature

which is mentioned often by students as being one of the most supportive aspects of the sixth form. Students know that their views are heard and valued both as individuals and through the sixth form committee and college council.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The college has good links with parents. Links with the community are good. They are very good with schools and other colleges.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The college places good emphasis on a positive partnership with parents.
- Parents are provided with very good information about their children's progress.
- The college uses its links with the community well to enrich students' learning.
- Links with primary and other schools are very strong.

Commentary

42. The college's good partnership with parents has a good influence on students' learning and achievement. Most parents support the college's work and feel that their children make good progress as a result of good teaching and expectations for students to do well.

43. While not all parents are involved in their children's education as the college would like, most are supportive of its events and activities, for example helping in a project to improve the college grounds. Meetings with mentors and subject teachers are well attended. Parents are well represented on the governing body. They are knowledgeable about the college's development and represent parents' views well at governing body meetings.

44. Parents are provided with very good information about the work of the college and are kept very well informed about students' progress through end of module assessments, progress and end of year reports. There are very good, regular opportunities for parents to meet with teachers and mentors. A few parents would like more notice of these meetings. The college produces excellent module booklets for each year group. These give parents high quality information on what their children are being taught, the resources required, how work is assessed and what parents can do to support learning at home. They ensure that parents are kept fully informed and involved in their children's learning.

45. The college makes good use of its links and partnerships with local industry, commerce, community groups and individuals to broaden students' experiences and learning outside the college and to raise its status in the community. There is good participation in, for example, band concerts, sports events and working with senior citizens through the Duke of Edinburgh scheme. The college liaises well with the surrounding community and is quick to act if there are any problems with behaviour outside the college. It is developing its plans well to broaden its community links through its recent application for Extended School Status.

46. Through its specialist status, the college is strengthening its already very good links with primary schools to offer students and teachers opportunities to work together in ICT, mathematics, design technology and science. Through the RAISE project, the college is training Year 6 students to be peer mediators so that they bring their skills into college when they start in Year 7. Links with other colleges to extend opportunities for students, such as those on work-based learning programmes are also very good. There are good opportunities for sixth form students to visit places of higher education before making their future choices. The college's plumbing centre has a very good reputation and is used very well by other secondary schools and a local special school. Developing initiatives, such as 'Tasting Trades', will also give students from other schools very good opportunities to try vocational occupations at the college.

47. The partnership with parents / carers of students with special educational needs is very good. There are very effective arrangements to involve parents / carers of students with statements in their annual reviews. Regular parents meetings are programmed by the team of teachers and teaching assistants to involve parents / carers and students in shaping the targets on their individual education plans in accordance with the expectations as laid down in the Code of Practice for such students. The learning support team are very accessible to parents / carers. The teacher in charge of the learning support unit is in frequent contact with the parents / carers of students with very challenging behaviour and who are at risk of exclusion. He has developed a range of creative strategies that have resulted in the majority of parents and carers supporting his aims to improve attendance which in turn leads to better learning. Parents/carers of students with learning difficulties are made aware of the protocols for complaint if they are concerned about the quality of provision for their children. The innovative links that the college has developed with several partner schools widen the range of opportunity for all students with special needs.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership by the headteacher is excellent. The senior leadership group provide very good support. Governance is very good. Management is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership puts the needs of the individual first.
- Leaders and managers relate well to students.
- Governors fulfil their statutory duties very well.
- Financial control is very secure.

Commentary

48. Leadership by the headteacher is excellent. Her clear vision encompasses all students; she considers meeting the needs of the individual as paramount. She has enabled the college to be known for its success with needy children. With an emphasis on teaching and learning the Senior Leadership Group offers the headteacher very good support. Like the headteacher, they relate well to the students, are high profile around the college and are knowledgeable and innovative. All leaders are clear about their roles; they expect to find solutions and use their specific expertise to this end. Although individually they have specific strengths, collectively they offer strong leadership where every individual matters.

49. The college has strong systems in place to evaluate its performance. Management is good. This is impressive as there have been many staff changes and cutbacks. A number of heads of subjects are relatively new to the profession. However, with an emphasis on academic achievement combined with the assistance of advanced skills teachers and high levels of care, management procedures are positively affecting progress.

50. The governing body is very well led. It has improved enormously since the last inspection. The chair ensures that legalities are in place and that statutory duties are met. They struggle with ensuring a daily act of collective worship for all but have not given up on this and are still trying to address the matter. They understand the strengths and weaknesses of the college and they are actively involved in evaluating their own performance. A strong committee structure is in place.

51. The college development plan (CDP) is an extremely detailed document. Every one of the twenty eight priorities has its own in depth planning schedule. All take part in its development and their contributions are always considered. It might be that there are too many priorities to ensure full implementation but all are important.

52. Financial control is very good. When hit by a substantially reduced budget in recent years, a resultant deficit has been recovered very quickly, although not without some hard decision making.

53. The arrangements for leading and managing the performance of all staff are very good. Systems are in place for setting staff targets and monitoring staff progress that are linked to the college improvement plan. The award of Investors in People recognises that the professional development needs of all staff and targets for the college are being identified so that realistic objectives for improvement can be set. Performance management is helping to improve the quality of teaching and many other aspects that contribute to students' learning. The quality and effectiveness of continuous staff development is very good. After-college programmes of in-service training provide a focus for the development of many aspects that support the learning of students. The induction of new staff, including newly qualified teachers, is good. Staff are given every opportunity to prepare themselves for their roles prior to employment and, once in post, are supported well by their mentors. The college contributes very well to the initial training of new teachers and trainees are very well supported. The college supports staff welfare well and a consultative staff council meets every half term to discuss the needs of staff. Arrangements for the deployment and workload distribution of staff are given due attention and are effective. Since the last inspection improvement in the leadership and management of performance management and continuous professional development has been very good.

54. The leadership and management of special educational needs are very good. There is a clear and shared vision throughout the college and a real commitment to include students with special educational needs in an innovative curriculum and to enable them to achieve academic success. The procedures for identifying special educational needs are good and the managed programmes to meet their needs are very good. The department's self-evaluation procedures have identified that there are some inconsistencies in the way teachers use students' individual education plans, and plans to deal with this by involving subject teachers in setting subject-specific targets."

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2004 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	4994321	Balance from previous year	-190983
Total expenditure	4787408	Balance carried forward to the next	15930
Expenditure per student	3770		

Sixth Form

55. Leadership and management of the sixth form are very good. There is a commitment to providing a good education and equal opportunities for all students. Curriculum leadership is very good and management is good.

OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES

Provision for work related learning is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Outside agencies make relevant contributions to the programme.
- The college is creating good opportunities for students to take part in work experience.
- The generation of key skills is properly sequenced, monitored and evaluated.
- There is a work related co-ordinator who has good contacts with employers and parents.

Commentary

56. In this college a large number of students take a work related course. The college has links with many partners and agencies in Bournemouth and Poole. The Enterprise Challenge, runs in conjunction with Dorset Enterprise and Skills, is a practical hands on activity for students that gives them the opportunity to manage their own company. The contacts the college has developed with Bournemouth University are of benefit to many students. Potentially disaffected students in Years 10 and 11 are offered work with these partners. Students are learning how to work with others towards achieving given objectives. Most students are able to carry out tasks to meet responsibilities. Work placement has a high profile in the sixth form. Careers advice is of a high quality.

57. Students on work related courses learn well and make good progress. They mature in both their attitude to work and in their behaviour generally. They gain confidence in themselves. Most demonstrate good knowledge of a wide range of business operations. They apply themselves to work and are familiar with the attributes that employers' value. Some have convinced firms, in which they have worked, to consider them for full time employment when they leave college. A Young Enterprise scheme is well supported by employers.

58. The guidance provided to students is designed to support anxious learners who need to be informed. The Careers Department and Connexions play a role in interviewing students. The guidance is always relevant and succinct. The teachers help students understand the fundamentals of going to work, the purpose being to stimulate students to think about the purposes of earning a living, to try it out for themselves and to appreciate, critically, the usefulness of being on time and to be willing to work with others. Level 2 and 3 vocational courses have a full week's work placement which is a good experience.

59. Students' views are very positive. They are fully informed about their progress and most settle quickly to going to work. They appreciate the opportunities they are given to develop their skills, particularly the chance to undertake work experience. The leadership and management of work based learning are very good.

Provision for the community is satisfactory; community links are **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The college has recently acquired extended school status.
- There is a strong programme planned to promote Life Long learning
- The initiative is well underway but implementation is only embryonic

Commentary

60. The college has strong links with the community but there is an unspoken barrier that of parents not coming in, which the college seeks to overcome. As the implementations of extended school status are fully realised, there is an expectation that new partnership links will improve attendance and promote Life Long Learning. Community and parents' forums are on the agenda along with further Duke of Edinburgh Award opportunities, a nursery facility and a health and welfare programme. The college is anxious to build on its existing good links with business, engineering, artists and theatres. Lettings are very successful for sports activities.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 3 and 4.

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in English at the end of Years 9 and 11 are below those expected of colleges with a similar intake.
- Teaching is good, with many students achieving well in the subject.
- The literacy strand of the Key Stage 3 National Strategy makes a positive contribution to learning in Years 7 to 9.
- A significant number of boys make insufficient progress in Years 10 and 11.
- There are too few chances for students to use re-drafting skills in order to improve the quality of their written work.

Commentary

61. Attainment upon entry in all aspects of English is well below average. As a result of good teaching and an imaginative curriculum, the majority of students achieve well in lessons and make good progress over time. However, overall standards in the subject are influenced by the above average number of students with special educational needs with the result that standards at the end of Year 9 remain well below average. This was reflected in the most recent national assessment tasks in 2004 when standards in English were well below the national average and below those expected of colleges with a similar intake.

62. Many students, in particular girls, continue to make good progress in Years 10 and 11, with the results that girls' standards in the most recent GCSE examinations, were close to, yet below those achieved by students in similar colleges. Because of a lack of commitment to the subject, a significant minority of boys make insufficient progress in Years 10 and 11 and achieve well below average grades in their final examinations.

63. Most students in Years 7 to 11 display good social oral skills, but are less confident in their ability to express their ideas and opinions in anything like a formal situation. As a result, standards in speaking and listening skills at ages 14 and 16 are below average.

64. Many students in Years 7 to 9 have satisfactory technical reading skills. Some however have a poor vocabulary and under-developed reading comprehension skills, with the result that they do not always fully understand the poetry, plays and novels that they read. Although critical reading skills are well taught in Years 10 and 11, a number of students have problems applying them to the demanding texts they read, and don't always appreciate and understand the layers of meaning in the books that they read. Standards in reading at ages 14 and 16 are below average.

65. Students develop the necessary basic skills of punctuation, grammar and spelling in Years 7 to 9 and use them in a good range of writing activities which allow them to write for different purposes and in different styles. Whilst students plan their work well, there are too few chances for them to improve the quality of their written work, through the use of re-drafting skills. Written work remains well below average at the end of Year 9.

66. Standards in written work vary significantly in Years 10 and 11. A number of able students, often girls, produce essays of a good length. These essays contain a personal response to the

questions asked of them and are well supported by relevant evidence from the texts and well-selected quotations.

67. The scrutiny of students' written work and observations in lessons reveal that a number of boys only put a limited amount of effort into their writing activities. This results in work which is short in length and superficial in detail. As a result standards in written work at age 16 are below average and, for many boys, well below average.

68. The quality of teaching is good. Lessons are well planned, organised and managed, with teachers using resources and newly acquired inter-active whiteboards in a very effective manner to develop and extend knowledge and understanding. The English strand on the Key Stage 3 National Strategy is likewise used well to improve learning in the subject, though some teachers use it in an inconsistent manner. Although work is matched to the needs and abilities of students in the set classes, occasions were observed where teachers could have made increased demands on students and challenged them further.

69. Leadership and management in the subject are good. In the very short time she has been in post the acting Head of English has developed a clear understanding of what needs to be done in order to raise standards in the subject and has put together a good department development plan in order to respond to these issues. A number of these strategies however have yet to be put into place and embedded in practice.

70. The department has a good modular curriculum in place. It uses a good range of assessment procedures, with students being involved in setting their own targets for improvement. Resources for the subject are good with staff producing some high quality student booklets to support them in their learning.

71. The nature of the college has changed since the last inspection, with it now accepting more students with special educational needs. When placed within this context, standards in, and provision for, the subject have been maintained.

Language and Literacy across the curriculum

72. The development and use of literacy across the curriculum was identified as a key issue in the last report. The college has responded to this issue in a positive manner, with it now being identified as a key area for development.

73. All members of staff have been involved in a full day of training for this area of the curriculum, with the member of staff responsible for literacy across the curriculum having organised a rolling programme of twilight training sessions for individual departments. It is expected that all subjects respond in an active manner to the development of literacy in their subject, and address it in both department handbooks and schemes of work. Key words and vocabulary are on display in all departments, with teachers having received training in the development of spelling skills and the use of writing frames to support students in the structure of their written work.

74. The development and use of literacy skills has been monitored in departments, with evidence that it is now making a contribution to raising standards in literacy. This was confirmed by the majority of inspectors during the inspection, though it is recognised that many students still have below and well below average literacy skills. This remains an area for development in the college.

French and Spanish

Provision in modern foreign languages is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Overall the quality of teaching is good.
- Leadership and management are very good.
- Teachers work well as a team, producing good materials for learning.
- Teachers take students on visits to France and Spain, so that students can use the languages.
- Not all teachers use the foreign language sufficiently in the classroom.
- Students do not check their written work with sufficient vigour.

Commentary

75. Currently when students enter the college they study French or Spanish, and can continue with it to the end of Year 11.

76. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 were below national standards in French in 2004. In comparison with national standards, French GCSE results were well above in 2002 and 2003. Spanish GCSE results were well above in 2002 and 2004, but below in 2003. They were well above most other subjects in the college in all years except for Spanish in 2003. In French in Year 9, performance showed students working below national standards. There are currently no students studying a language in Year 11. Those learning French in Year 10 are expected to do well at GCSE in 2006.

77. In both languages, students are stronger in listening, speaking and writing than in reading. Overall, there is a satisfactory amount of written exercises and sustained writing in both languages: however, students make unnecessary errors in grammar and spelling, preventing them from achieving higher standards. Year 7 students were able to talk in Spanish about their houses. Year 8 students listened to a Spanish tape and could understand information about holidays. Year 9 students could read information about healthy living in French and match sentences correctly to pictures. Year 10 students could write letters in French to book hotel rooms and air tickets, and hire cars.

78. The overall quality of teaching in both French and Spanish is good, and has improved since the last inspection. Teachers are proficient in both foreign languages and have good accents. They use French and Spanish for parts of the lesson to develop students' listening skills. Most use a little English to check understanding or explain grammatical points, but sometimes they use English too much. They plan a well organised sequence of activities, which involve the students in their learning. Standards of discipline are good, but a few students find it difficult to concentrate sufficiently. Teachers manage classes well, and give students a variety of experiences in the classroom. They provide challenging tasks for the higher attainers, and give support to those with learning difficulties. Most students, including the higher attainers and those with learning difficulties, achieve well and make good progress in lessons throughout the college.

79. The quality of teaching ensures that the vast majority of students behave well. They show interest in their work, sustain their concentration, and develop good study skills. Their response is usually good throughout the college. Many students show an obvious sense of enjoyment in lessons. They work well in pairs, and sometimes have opportunities to use their initiative in creating role plays and working independently.

80. The organisation of the curriculum meets statutory requirements. The department is very well led and organised, and has prioritised development plans. The new interactive whiteboards are helping to improve teaching and learning. However, curtains and new carpets are needed. There has been good progress since the previous report: GCSE results have improved, homework is set regularly, and students are better at speaking and writing.

MATHEMATICS

Provision for mathematics is **satisfactory**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are rising at the end of Year 9, and in 2004 were above the average of similar colleges, although GCSE grades have not improved and are below similar colleges and local educational authority targets.
- Teaching and learning are good overall, but inconsistent across the department, ranging from very good with excellent features to unsatisfactory, and with too few full-time specialists.
- Provision for students with special educational needs is good, with very good teaching assistants.
- Higher attaining students in top sets are stretched and challenged well, but elsewhere there is insufficient matching of work to potential ability.
- Leadership and management are good, the two acting heads of department are coping very well with the absence through illness of the nominal head of department

Commentary

81. Results of the mathematics tests at the end of Year 9 have steadily improved, and in 2004 were above the average for colleges where students were of similar prior attainment, although well below the national average. In 2004 mathematics GCSE A* to C grades were well below the national average, and below results of similar colleges. The proportion of higher grades was also below the set target, although A*-G grades were in line with targets and equal to similar colleges. In 2004 boys and girls obtained similar results although in previous years boys were better than girls.

82. Standards seen are below national expectations overall, but are dependent on the quality of teaching, students' attitudes, attendance, prior attainment and previous experience. Students enter the college in Year 7 with well below average ability, although this is steadily improving and the excellent transition units from Year 6 to 7 are helping improve induction and entry standards. Achievement is good overall, better in Years 7 to 9 where the national strategy is well embedded and specialists teach most groups, set by ability in half years. In Years 10 and 11 students are set by prior attainment and aptitude across each year, with non-specialist teachers taking many groups, often with inappropriate material, resources or learning methods. Weak basic number skills and insecure number bond recognition affect many students who otherwise develop reasonable understanding of mathematics topics. Difficulty with combining negative numbers is evident at all ages and levels of ability. The focus on algebra from Year 7 is not yet influencing older students' confidence in manipulating expressions or applying algebra to solving problems. Independent learning skills are at an early stage of development, although there is now an increased emphasis on using and applying mathematics.

83. Higher attaining students in top sets are being stretched and challenged appropriately, for example in Year 7 successfully finding the n th term to number sequences, in preparation for the 'Window Panes' coursework, which assesses their investigative skills. The top set in Year 10 will be entered for GCSE early, as in 2004, although this strategy has not resulted in students attaining the highest grades possible, it is having a positive impact on motivation and potential to take mathematics in the sixth-form. Students in Year 11 top set studying statistics for an extra GCSE showed good understanding of the capture/ recapture method of estimating population size as well as skills relating equations to graphical curves. Discussion of social and public health issues in this well structured lesson revealed high levels of general knowledge. Paired discussion and group-work was also used very well in the Year 11 middle GCSE groups revising a range of topics in innovative ways, although other GCSE classes were learning little, mundanely working through text-book exercises with little interest or motivation to succeed. The 'nurture' groups in Years 7 and 8 of vulnerable students and those with special educational needs showed good achievement through very structured class teaching, developing good habits and a work ethic. Many students in every year have problems in maintaining attention and controlling their own behaviour, with low level

disruption a feature where teachers did not have sufficient skills to manage the class appropriately. The skilled and knowledgeable teaching assistants were very effective in helping students with a range of special educational needs at all levels of ability.

84. Teaching is good overall, but inconsistent across the department, varying from very good, with excellent features to unsatisfactory. The best lessons are structured well with a variety of learning activities, which involve and interest the students, and develop them personally and socially. The most thorough lesson plans are specific about the required outcomes, the exact procedures and tasks, and criteria for assessing students. Starters vary from excellent to non-existent, at best stimulating students to think mathematically. Some very good plenary activities or summaries of learning were seen. The majority of teachers know their students very well, and relationships are often good, with evident mutual respect. Students appreciate an effective lesson, where they work collaboratively with each other, and contribute to class discussion. The more successful teachers give good explanations of concepts, skills and methods, using precise mathematical terms which students then develop as part of their vocabulary. Key words are emphasized by all teachers, and some also use other literacy development methods, with discussion and group-work developing well. The least successful lessons lack pace, with insufficient stimulating material for the more able in the class. Assessment is good, through regular tests as well as on-going through each lesson, assigning and recording appropriate levels or grades. Homework is usually relevant and set regularly, often marked or discussed in lessons. Marking is inconsistent however, ranging from detailed corrections with constructive comments, to little or no impact on students' work. Self-assessment is being developed through discussion in lessons and the innovative learning log books. Students do not yet understand sufficiently the meaning of levels and grades, nor are they consistently guided enough on how to improve.

85. Leadership and management of mathematics are good, but in a state of flux due to the absence of the head of department. The two teachers responsible for each Key Stage are jointly leading and managing the department very effectively. They are excellent role models as teachers, and are mentoring the new teachers very well. Appropriate vision helps the drive to improve the department and raise standards, but there are not enough full-time specialist mathematicians. The many non-specialists taking a few mathematics classes do not attend the department meetings involved in sharing good practice, and do not conform to improvements in teaching and learning, although the Key Stage Strategy is fully embedded in policies and procedures. Documentation is thorough, although Citizenship and work-related learning are not yet explicit in schemes of work or lesson plans. Resources have improved with the provision of interactive white boards in each room, although lack of preparation sometimes leads to poor quality presentation and ineffective use. Monitoring of quality of provision is insufficiently rigorous at present to raise standards sufficiently. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory.

Mathematics across the curriculum

86. A training session took place two years ago on numeracy across the curriculum, but with no development since. Informal contacts exist between mathematics and several departments or teachers, and appropriate advice is given when needed. Science provides for numeracy well, with teachers ensuring students' mathematical skills are sufficient for science tests, with an emphasis on graphs. Numeracy features in some schemes of work, but not in lesson plans. Students' skills were satisfactory for the demands of most subjects, although standards of mathematical competence are below average. Evidence of the use of mathematics was less than normally seen in subjects, with little evidence of numeracy in work seen or departments' documentation. At present there is no numeracy co-ordinator, or whole college monitoring, evaluation or development, an unsatisfactory situation.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership and management are good and result in effective systems that allow students to learn well.
- Teaching is good and students achieve well.
- ICT is used very well to develop students' knowledge, understanding and investigative skills.
- Assessment is used well to support students' learning in Years 7 to 11.
- Opportunities are not always planned to challenge exceptionally able students.

Commentary

87. The 2004 national test results for students in Year 9 were well below average. They were above average when compared with those for similar colleges. The results have been similar for the last three years and have improved in line with the national trend. Boys have done better than girls. Results in the 2004 GCSE examinations at the end of Year 11 were below average with girls doing better than boys. The results were above average when compared with those for similar colleges. Results have been around this level for the last three years.

88. The standards seen during the inspection were below average in Years 7 to 11. Top set Year 9 students know how motion is affected by gravitational force but are not clear about the relationship between mass and weight. Lower set Year 11 students know that eating certain foods and smoking can be damaging to health but cannot explain why. Top set Year 11 students are able to describe the effects of different types of radiation but not all can calculate the frequency of the radiation. Lower set Year 11 students know the basic difference between sexual and asexual reproduction but few students know what causes variation within a species. Students' numeracy, writing and communication skills are below average although students are confident users of ICT.

89. Students' levels of attainment on entry to the college are well below average. Students make good progress from entering the college to the end of Year 9 and also from Years 9 to 11, achieving better results than expected. The majority of students achieve well including those with special educational needs and there is no overall difference in the achievement of boys and girls.

90. The quality of teaching is good and students achieve well in lessons. Teaching was good or better in over half the lessons seen and there was no unsatisfactory teaching. An example of excellent teaching was seen. Good teaching is clearly influenced by the Key Stage 3 National Strategy training and includes a variety of stimulating activities that are delivered at a good pace to enable students to reach clearly defined targets. However, exceptionally able students are not always given the opportunities to extend their knowledge and understanding to the highest levels. ICT is used very well to support learning particularly in investigative science. Teachers' use of assessment to inform students of what they need to do to improve is used well in Years 7 to 9.

91. The leadership and management of the subject are good. The head of department has a clear vision for raising standards and creating learning programmes that students enjoy. He acts as a good role model and has developed and inspired an effective team of teachers and support staff. The performance of the department is evaluated well and teaching and learning is monitored effectively. Effective systems for tracking students' performance are in place. Many out-of-college and after-college activities such as astronomy and science clubs ensure that students have opportunities to experience science in a variety of contexts.

92. Since the last inspection, teaching has improved and progress is good in all years. ICT resources have improved significantly with the advent of Technology College status and the number of technical staff is now adequate. The quality of marking has improved and constructive comments are now widely used. The department uses numerical processes well.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision for information and communication technology is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- All students have an opportunity to gain a qualification in ICT by age 16
- The ICT strand of the KS3 National Strategy has been effectively introduced
- Leadership and management in ICT are good
- ICT in subjects is good but there are some inconsistencies. However, there is a need for greater provision for whole class teaching using ICT in subjects
- Teaching is good overall; consequently, students' achievement in ICT is good.
- Business and Communications Studies is taught for less time than is recommended.

Commentary

93. On entry, students' experiences of ICT are varied and their levels of ICT capability low in relation to the national expectation. An extra ICT lesson in Year 7 is effective in bringing students' ICT levels to a more consistent level. Attainment by the end of Year 9 met the local education authority target for the college and covered the expected range of outcomes, although average attainment was below the national expectation. All students have the opportunity to achieve a qualification in ICT and about eighty per cent of students are successful in doing so. Attainment by age 16 is below average in the higher grades.

94. The programme of study for Years 7 to 9 is planned and taught in line with the standard of the National Strategy teaching materials. Current standards of work seen in Years 7 to 9 reflect the range of outcomes expected by age 14. Students can design a theme park ride and develop a computer control program to operate it. They can model the prices of mobile phone tariffs in a spreadsheet and use goal-seek to find a target value. They can construct a database to store and present the results of a questionnaire. They can evaluate web sites and use criteria for designing a presentation. They can create a web page using an editor and direct coding. When averaged across the ability range, the standard of work is below the national expectation. However, achievement for many students in Years 7 to 9 is good. The achievement of students identified as having special educational needs, was not noticeably different to other students, as was the case difference between boys and girls.

95. Currently, all students study a GCSE in Business and Communication Studies on reduced time, with some students also following a GCSE ICT course. The current standard of work on both courses reflects the full range of expected grades, with the predicted average grade being below the national average for these subjects. Students can design and create a children's book following project design requirements. They can plan a film script and characterisations and make presentations of the storyboard. They can create a booking database for a health club and evaluate methods of data collection. They can explain the differences between hierarchical and flat organisational structures. Achievement for many students is good. The work of gifted and talented students was generally better presented and showed greater depth of understanding.

96. Teaching is good overall with examples of very good and unsatisfactory teaching. A lesson judged as very good made use of a teacher's presentation to structure the lesson for a Year 9 group, setting out objectives and the criteria for making an effective presentation to an adult audience. Individual guidance was given to students as they worked. Students showed their presentations to the class, adding thoughtful comment, drawing upon the criteria. The lesson was well-constructed presenting different opportunities to reinforce understanding, including a bingo quiz based on database terminology. Effective questioning by the teacher drew out key points, expanding and exemplifying the points offered. The lesson was effective in developing skills of evaluation, mixing in a revision of key words and key features of project work. The lesson promoted the acquisition of ICT capability at the higher levels. In contrast, a Year 8 lesson judged as unsatisfactory students tossed a coin many times, transferring the results to a spreadsheet to show

how, as sample size increases, variation decreases. Lesson flow was hindered by a significant level of inattentiveness and the need for the teacher to continually call for attention. Some students were unable or unwilling to enter a simple formula into the spreadsheet. These problems diminished the opportunities of students to demonstrate their achievement. The department give much additional time to supporting the progress made by students. ICT rooms are available at lunchtime and after college and study days for examination groups are provided in the college holidays.

97. Leadership for ICT is good. There is good direction to ICT developments. Decisions about resources and provision have led the college to the stage where all students have the opportunity to gain a qualification in ICT. Provision for the teaching of ICT is good. Resources for using ICT in subjects are developing well. Staff development in promoting students' ICT capability in their work across subjects is well supported.

98. The management of ICT is good. There is a strong commitment to ensuring that the subject is made accessible to all learners. The ICT strand of the Key Stage 3 National Strategy has been effectively introduced. The subject leader has worked hard to introduce new course materials in Years 7 to 9 and to make new lesson resources available in electronic form to support the teaching by all staff in the department. There is a successful team approach to teaching courses. A range of electronic and printed materials have been made available to support students progress and special attention is given to ensuring that students understand how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. Support for new teaching staff is very good. The work of the department is effectively supported by an able teaching assistant and two well qualified technicians.

99. Since the last inspection attainment by age 16 has remained the same, i.e. below the national average. Attainment by age 14 is below national average but in line with the local education authority target. All students now have the opportunity to achieve an ICT certificate at the end of Year 11, which was not the case at the time of the last inspection. Teaching is now good in all year groups, which improves upon previous findings when teaching was unsatisfactory in Years 7 to 9. There is now a greater range of resources for ICT and ICT in subjects.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

100. The use of ICT in subjects of the curriculum is good overall. There are examples of very effective use of ICT, for example in design and technology where students use ICT to create 3-dimensional designs and packaging designs where carton nets are cut using CAD-CAM. In science students use laptop computers for data logging and use online resources in their learning. A growing number of interactive whiteboards have had a significant effect on teachers' confidence in using ICT, particularly for the presentation and structuring of lessons, for example in English, history, modern languages and ICT lessons. There is effective ICT support for selected students with language development needs. Although students have a good competence in ICT, the ICT capability of students is not yet fully exploited in improving learning effectiveness across all subjects. This is partly due to the limited availability of ICT rooms, for example in religious education. In art there are insufficient computers which can run the specialist photo-editing software needed, and in music there is a similar need for specialist computers and sequencing software. The use of the internet to support research-based approaches to learning is developing well in history and geography. Digital photography is used to analyse performance in physical education.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- In most lessons activities that are both fun and challenging motivate students to learn and so they achieve well.
- Borderline D / C grade GCSE students in Year 11 are not sufficiently secure in their understanding of physical geography.
- At times learning is impeded because students cannot access computers when they need them.
- Dynamic assessments engage students in their own assessment and this raises their achievement.

Commentary

101. Teacher assessments in recent years show that standards attained by Year 9 are in line with national averages. GCSE passes at grades A* to C were well below the national average in 2004. These results reflect a glitch in the pattern over recent years as in 2003 and 2002 passes at A* to C were in line with the national average. The GCSE group in 2004 was a small group of boys and three boys did badly bringing the overall results tumbling. Robust action by the head of department resulted in a change of syllabus and the current Year 11 are on target to reach national average results.

102. Attainment for current Year 9 students is in line with the national average. Given that attainment on entry in Year 7 is below average this demonstrates good achievement. Throughout Years 10 and 11, achievement continues to be good so that by Year 11 students' attainment is in line with the national average but a proportion of borderline D/C students are not sufficiently secure in their understanding of physical processes. By Year 9, the vast majority of students are confident to carry out enquiry work but the development of these skills is at times hindered because they cannot always access the internet when required. Their knowledge of place is good and they use the correct geographical terms to explain physical processes such as tectonic plate movement. By Year 11, students have good map skills and their analysis of data is a strong feature of their work. Overall, they do better when answering questions on human geography than on physical geography. The head of department uses his skills as an examiner to improve their understanding of physical geography but some students still struggle, for example in interpreting hydrographs.

103. Teaching and learning is good overall. It ranges from satisfactory to very good. The teaching of students with special educational needs is very good because of the use of visual cues to explain how geographical features are formed. In a Year 7 lesson students were spell bound as they watched their teacher use a model to demonstrate the formation of a waterfall. Their achievement was very good because the teacher, in an effective partnership with the teaching assistant, developed their thinking skills and so they made rapid gains in their understanding of different rock types and the erosion caused by the fast flow of water. The best teaching is characterised by very good subject knowledge, cracking pace, interesting activities and effective use of questions. When teaching is good students are interested in their learning and keen to do well as seen in a Year 9 lesson on the coffee trade. Satisfactory teaching lacks sparkle and challenge, and moves students on before they fully understand important facts or concepts, as happened in a Year 11 lesson on the interpretation of hydrographs.

104. Leadership and management are good. Schemes of work have been improved and the subject makes a valuable contribution to teaching students about citizenship. Assessment procedures are very good and involve students in self-assessment. There is good monitoring of teaching and learning which leads to the sharing of best practice and raised achievement. The internet is used well to support teaching and learning. Improvement since the last inspection is good.

History

Provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching is encouraging students to achieve their potential.
- The use of assessment to monitor progress is effective.
- There is a shared commitment to improving standards.

Commentary

105. Standards of work seen in history are average. These standards are achieved because the teaching is good. Students' interest in history causes their learning to be good. As a result, students' achievements overall, in relation to their standards when they began in Year 7, are good. This means that there are gains by the end of Years 9 and 11.

106. At the end of Year 9, the results of tests for 14 year olds were average. Boys and girls gained similar results. Overall, results have risen over recent years. At the end of Year 11 GCSE examination results in 2003 and 2004 were above average over the whole grade range. They were just below average for the top grades A* to C. Broadly, students do as well in history as they do in other subjects. While the results in 2004 were similar to those gained in 2003, a slightly higher proportion of students gained grades A* to C.

107. Most students have at least satisfactory knowledge and an understanding of time and past and present events. The higher attaining students can exercise their memory to a higher degree than the lower attaining students. Because of their better recall of what they have learnt and remembered the higher attaining students often do better than expected for their age. For example, students in Year 9 make accurate use of historical terms when describing a past event, as they did when examining events in World War 1. Lower attaining students, however, find it difficult to express their understanding clearly in their writing. For the majority of students the research work which they undertake is the most exciting part of their studies. This enthusiasm was shown in lessons on the Black Death. The level of skill shown is a match to their attainment in other aspects of history.

108. Students enter the college with attainment that is below average. At the end of Year 11 they gain GCSE results that are above the national average over the whole grade range. Students with special educational needs achieve well in history. A Year 9 class of 15 such students worked hard to make sense of the Battle of the Somme. They receive good teaching with activities that are carefully matched to their needs. For example, these students make good progress in developing their skills in information technology to secure good historical data. A Year 8 class used an Internet website to track the Fire of London which consumed 400 acres within the city. The writing produced, following the visual scenes, was of a high order.

109. The quality of teaching and learning is good. In many aspects teaching is judged to be very good. Teachers follow detailed schemes of work. These schemes ensure that students move on quickly to new ideas which continually reinforce students' understanding from earlier work. Students who are gifted and talented make particularly good progress because they are provided with a rich and interesting variety of tasks. Excellent use is made of ICT to stimulate an interest in history.

110. The leadership of history is very good and management of the subject is good. The head of subject leads the team well. There is a strong sense of commitment to teaching interesting history. The team know what has to be improved and the subject plan is relevant and sensible. The subject has made good progress since the previous inspection. Examination results are improving as is the proportion of those choosing the subject for GCSE. Teaching is better. Marking is now more helpful to students as their work has clear indications of how improvement can be achieved.

Religious Education

Provision in religious education is **good**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Progress since the last inspection has been very good.
- The department has two specialist teachers.
- The lessons have strong content drawn from world religions.
- Students sit the GCSE examination a year early.
- Students work well in the lessons but on occasions some find it difficult to settle and they do not achieve of their best.

Commentary

111. At the end of Year 11 in 2004, in the GCSE examination, the standards of attainment were above national average. The standards seen during the inspection are broadly in line with the standards expected nationally. Students can make intelligent references to many aspects of Christianity and Islam. These include issues about concepts of God and the topic of evil and suffering. Students know and understand how symbols play an important part in religions and they can describe some of their meanings. Their ability in the use of information technology is limited. Some students have good writing skills.

112. At the end of Year 9, the standards of attainment are broadly in line with standards indicated in the locally Agreed Syllabus. Occasionally it is below this. Students have broad knowledge and understanding of many aspects of world religions. These include pilgrimage in Hinduism, aspects of God in Christianity and Islam, and many topics in Buddhism. Their skills in information technology in religious education are limited. Some of the students have good writing skills. Overall the achievement of students is good, though sometimes it is below this. Students with special educational needs make good progress, as do the more able and less able students. There is no significant difference between the attainment of boys and girls.

113. Overall the teaching is good. Often it is very good. Occasionally it is unsatisfactory. All lessons are well planned with clear learning objectives. A significant strength of the teaching is the knowledge and expertise that the specialist teachers bring to the lessons. This ensures that learning about world religions is strong. In most lessons, students are attentive and they concentrate on their work. In some instances however, students become unsettled and their behaviour is less than satisfactory. Their learning suffers as a result. Otherwise in most lessons, due to a fast pace and high expectations, students learn a great deal in the time available. The lessons include a wide range of interesting activities such as videos and work-sheets. The teaching makes a good contribution to the development of literacy skills. The teaching also makes a good contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Homework is set and an active assessment policy is in place.

114. The management is good. The leadership is very good. The department has a good range of documentation. The staffing is very good. The accommodation is very good. Resources are satisfactory. The department has insufficient text-books. Progress since the last inspection has been very good overall. There has been significant progress in terms of the quality of teaching, in the standards of students' work and in their achievement. The opportunity to take GCSE a year early has proved successful in terms of motivation.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and Technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching enables students to achieve very well.
- Students make good use of ICT as a tool when designing and making products.
- Good support material including the college intranet has a positive effect on learning.
- The curriculum for Years 7 to 9 does not yet fully cover the national curriculum requirements.

Commentary

115. GCSE results in 2003 and 2004 show that students achieved close to average results when compared to all colleges nationally. The proportion of students achieving grades in the A* to C range is well above average compared to national results for the nearest similar colleges. The proportion of students who were entered for design and technology was much higher than in other colleges. Overall students achieved higher in this subject than in most other subjects and boys achieved higher than girls by a narrow margin. Results are fairly consistent between the traditional material areas in the subject except in engineering in 2004. A group of boys achieved poorly because they found the academic rigour of the course too demanding.

116. By Year 9, students are achieving standards that are average. This represents very good achievement because they entered the subject with standards that were below average. Students show a good balance between their ability to design and make products and have a good understanding of the design process. They handle tools and materials confidently and pay attention to health and safety requirements. The weak literacy skills of many students are a barrier to achievement as is the poor response to set homework. The use of ICT is helping to raise standards. Students in Year 9 who had made a Steinhaus cube (a wooden puzzle) were observed using computer aided design linked to computer aided manufacture (CAD/CAM) to produce the packaging. Students also worked well in small teams to produce an instruction leaflet with diagrams and a booklet to accompany the work, using the computer. Students make quality products in a range of materials and enjoy the subject. Students with special educational needs achieve very well.

117. By Year 11, students have made good progress in relation to their capability and are achieving very well. They are able to apply their knowledge of the design process to situations presented to them as coursework tasks. They use ICT as a tool to help them when designing and making products. Coursework folios are well presented. Although many of this year's folios are a long way from completion they contain some very good elements. Students are able to carry out effective research including evaluation of existing products and write good specifications for their products. Weak literacy skills continue to cause problems for many students.

118. Teaching and learning are very good in Years 7 to 11. Individual modules of work are very well planned and there are clear links between units of work. Teachers are already successfully trialling parts of the recently produced guidelines for teaching the subject in Years 7 to 9. The curriculum does not ensure that it provides optimum coverage of national requirements. Teachers provide very good support materials including information on the college intranet to help students of all capabilities achieve very well. The teachers are all subject specialists who are able to interest, manage and engage students with a variety of teaching strategies. Students say they enjoy the subject and as a result they are well motivated to learn and behaviour in lessons is very good. Students were observed working well both individually and collaboratively.

119. The leadership and management of the subject are very effective. There is a clear shared vision for the subject and teachers work well as a team. The achievement of technology college

status has enabled the department to move forward rapidly and innovate, particularly in the implementation of ICT within the subject. Since the previous inspection there has been a good improvement. Standards have improved year on year and resources have increased.

The Plumbing Centre

120. This new facility enables students at the college and from other institutions to understand the nature of the plumbing industry. Students have the opportunity to gain an industry recognised qualification, which will help towards further training or stand alone as a skill for life. Much of the work is 'hands on' but is underpinned with theory and visits to various companies. Students in Year 10 are able to undertake their work experience in a plumbing environment. Two Year 10 students on work experience in college were interviewed on site and hold very positive views of their course. Plans are well advanced to provide this type of experience for other trades. In the Year 12 lesson sampled students were observed achieving well as they plumbed in a range of appliances. Teaching and learning were good and centred around the good relationships which exist between teacher and students.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Versatile and knowledgeable staff support students well across a wide range of art activities.
- Students are very clear about how well they are doing and how to improve as a result of very good assessment procedures.
- Projects are well planned to teach skills and understanding appropriate to all abilities.
- Students in Years 7 to 9 have inadequate opportunities to use ICT.
- There is no collection of graded work to standardise teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9.

Commentary

121. On entry in Year 7 standards attained are below average overall with a significant number of students well below average. By Year 9 standards in the work seen are average representing good achievement over Years 7 to 9. Girls generally attain higher standards than boys though both are represented at highest and lowest levels. Students with special needs and those with a talent for the subject also achieve well.

122. By Year 11 standards in the work seen are above average representing further good achievement over the GCSE course. In 2004 GCSE results were well above the national average with all students gaining the higher A* to C grades. This matched the results for 2003 and shows a significant increase on previous years. On average, students attained one grade higher in art and design than in their other subjects.

123. The quality of teaching and learning is consistently good across the age range. Lessons and projects are very well planned against a well-constructed programme of activities. Teachers bring a very good breadth and depth of knowledge and expertise from their own experience as practising artists enabling them to support students well across a wide range of projects. Very good one-to-one teaching meets the needs of students of all abilities and sets appropriate targets. Assessment procedures are very good, especially in the GCSE course, with very thorough systems for recording assessments and tracking students' progress. Good strategies, that increasingly involve students, are in place evaluating their own and others' work. There is currently no collection of assessed artwork to illustrate and standardise teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 and to help students with their judgements. ICT is taught and used effectively in Years 10 and 11 using

specialist art software in the department. There are insufficient computers in the department to teach ICT in art and design to the earlier years and appropriate software is not yet available on the college's computer network.

124. Leadership and management are good. Although there was no clear leadership for the two terms leading to and including the inspection, good management systems, established by the previous head of department, have sustained the running of the department. The newly appointed head of department has already been effective in supporting colleagues and ensuring continuity over recent months. Improvement since the last inspection is very good.

Music

Provision in music is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is a very good level of individual help given in lessons, which helps all groups of students to make good progress.
- Lessons are well planned and well matched to the students' needs.
- Assessment is very good; marking is detailed and effectively linked to the National Curriculum.
- There is insufficient use of ICT in Years 7 to 9.
- There is a loss of time in some lessons due to the teachers having to deal with low level disruption.

Commentary

125. Standards of attainment are average overall. The numbers entered for GCSE in recent years are too small for valid comparisons with national statistics, but results indicate standards usually about the national average for all schools and well above for colleges with a similar intake. In work seen in Years 7 to 9, standards are close to the national average. Students control keyboards well and play easy melodies using simple fingering systems. They show a reasonable understanding of staff and graphic notation but lack fluency when reading it. Singing standards are average. When composing the students use chords well with aptly chosen timbres. Many of their melodies reflect good ideas and effective word setting. When playing in groups they can maintain the pulse and keep in time. The listening work shows students identifying instruments and features of style with some use of musical vocabulary. In Years 10 and 11, standards overall are at national average and well above when compared with similar colleges. However the number of students taking music is too small for comparisons to be entirely meaningful. Performance standards are varied but the higher attaining students demonstrate very good musicianship when performing. Compositions are also varied but overall show interesting ideas and good exploitation of the chosen medium. When listening the students show some perception of features of instrumentation and composition devices but are weak on placing music in its historical context.

126. Achievement is good at both Years 9 and 11. Students enter with musical standards well below average and do well to attain average standards by Year 9. They continue to do well in Years 10 and 11 in attaining standards well above average for similar colleges. Boys and girls do equally well. Students with special needs and gifted and talented students also make good progress and achieve well in relation to their prior attainment.

127. Teaching and learning are good in all year groups. The teaching is very consistent; most lessons are good or better and no unsatisfactory teaching was seen. The instrumental teaching is also good. The teachers have very good subject knowledge and use it effectively in well planned lessons. Resources are well used to engage the students and give variety to the work. There is a very good level of individual help given by teachers and support staff and this helps students with special needs and talented students to make good progress. The students collaborate well in paired and group work and work productively as a result. However, in some lessons, low levels of disruptive behaviour cause loss of time and pace. Marking is very good, it is conscientious and

detailed. Assessment is very regular and keeps students well informed as to how well they are doing. There is insufficient use of ICT in Years 7 to 9; this is mainly due to lack of equipment and affects composing standards in particular.

128. Leadership and management are good. The leadership provides a good role model and has established an effective team with a clear vision of what the department should be doing. The curriculum is well organised and there is good self evaluation and monitoring of performance. The department makes a good contribution to the students' cultural development, particularly through a focus on music of other cultures. However at present extra-curricular activities only attract limited support and need further development. There has been good improvement since the last inspection. The quality of teaching and assessment has improved resulting in an improvement in attainment in Years 7 to 9. Resources have been improved and the accommodation has been significantly improved.

Drama

Provision for drama is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in drama at the end of Year 11 are above average.
- The good teaching in the subject results in students making real progress in their improvisational skills.
- Students demonstrate personal enthusiasm for the subject. This contributes to good achievement in lessons.
- Students in Years 7 to 9 have a limited understanding of discrete drama techniques and strategies.
- Students in Years 10 and 11 have little understanding of the working methods of influential directors and theatre practitioners.

Commentary

129. Students have a limited experience and knowledge of drama and role-play prior to arriving at college. As a result of good teaching and an imaginative drama curriculum students make good progress in the subject and achieve standards in line with expectation for their age by the end of Year 9. Students sustain good progress in Years 10 and 11 and achieve well, though standards in the most recent GCSE Drama examinations in 2004 were below average. Standard observed in the current Year 11 lessons indicate that students are on task to achieve above average grades.

130. Students in Years 7 could be seen to be making good progress in their improvisational skills as they worked in groups in interpreting a short horror story. Students in Year 9 likewise made good progress and achieve well in their devising skills as they interpreted a scene from Shakespeare's 'Macbeth' in a comic book style. Although students displayed a good understanding of 'freeze frames' in this activity and were able to incorporate them into their work, they have a limited understanding of other discrete drama techniques and strategies. Students in Year 11 were seen to be developing good drama skills as they focussed on the importance of eye contact in creating and sustaining believable characters. Students in Year 11 rely very much on interpreting and directing their own work, with little understanding of how influential directors and theatre practitioners utilise a range of working methods when interpreting individual characters and scenes. Students work well together in their drama lessons. They listen to and value each other's ideas and opinions and are prepared to experiment with a number of approaches to their work, before agreeing on a final framework for their improvisations. Students with special educational needs achieve well.

131. The good progress made in lessons is enhanced by students' enthusiasm for the subject and their good self-discipline.

132. Whilst a number of more able students in Years 10 and 11 write in an informed manner about the practical activities they have been involved in, some students tend to describe what they have done, rather than evaluate the success or failure of the skills and techniques that they have used.

133. The quality of teaching is good. Teachers are secure in their subject knowledge and convey it to students in a meaningful and informed manner. Lessons are well planned, organised and managed with a chance for students to develop and extend their drama skills over time. Teachers provide students with good support and advice and support, yet allow them to retain ownership of their work. Chances are given for students to share their work with others, with regular opportunities to evaluate both their own and other's work with the intention of improving it.

134. Evidence from the inspection period would indicate that leadership and management in the subject are good. The department has a good range of documentation and schemes of work to support all teachers with the delivery of the subject. There are good assessment procedures in place, with all students contributing to the setting of their individual targets for improvement.

135. The department provides students with a good range of extra-curricular activities. All students are given the chance to take part in annual productions, with Year 11 students performing their examination pieces to an invited audience. Students also regularly visit the theatre in order to extend their wider knowledge of drama.

136. With the chance for students to work in an inter-active manner and to explore a number of contemporary issues, the subject makes a positive contribution to students' moral and social development.

137. The good standards achieved in the last inspection have been maintained.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

The overall quality of provision is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results in the 2004 GCSE physical education and dance examinations are very significantly above the national average.
- The leadership and management of the department are excellent and all staff share a commitment to raising the status and standards of the department.
- Very good relationships and good lesson management means students have a very positive attitude to the subject.
- There is a wide range of extra-curricular activities that are very well supported.
- The high quality accommodation has a very positive effect on student's enjoyment of the subject and attainment.

Commentary

138. Results in GCSE examinations have steadily improved since the previous inspection, and in the 2004 examination the number of students gaining the higher A* to C grade passes in the physical education and dance examinations was significantly better than the national average.

139. The standard of attainment at the end of Year 9 is in line with the national average. This represents good achievement by students who sometimes bring with them from primary schools limited experience and skills. In games activities students demonstrate good levels of ball handling skills and spatial awareness, and are developing the skills that will enable them to compete successfully in a wide range of sporting activities.

140. This good achievement is continued during Years 10 and 11 and by the time students are 16 years old the overall standard of attainment in the non-examination course is better than that seen nationally. Good levels of skills are clearly evident in a wide range of activities. For those taking the GCSE courses standards are well above average with noticeable strengths in the theoretical elements of the course. These are well linked to the practical work and result in very well above average levels of knowledge and understanding.

141. Dance is taught to students in Years 7 to 9 as one of a range of performing arts subjects. Students respond very positively to the high quality teaching, and by the end of Year 9 most are able to take responsibility for developing a story line, choreographing it and then performing it with fluency and control. In Years 10 and 11 dance is not a compulsory subject but enthusiastic and able groups have opted to take the GCSE award in the subject. Their attainment is significantly better than that seen nationally. They compose and perform accurately and expressively, and successfully communicate their intention through dance. They work hard to develop their techniques, and readily accept the many opportunities there are to practise, refine and consolidate their skills.

142. Students with special educational needs are well integrated, given much sensitive and skilful support, and reach levels of attainment that are commendable. Many take part in the many inter-college games and competitions and gain much success. Many have represented Dorset in a range of sporting activities, and some have gone on to gain international honours.

143. Overall teaching and learning are good and is a major strength of the department. All lessons observed were judged to be at least satisfactory, with a significant number being judged to be very good or excellent. Important strengths of teaching are the very good relationships and management of students, linked to high expectations, which combine to create a co-operative atmosphere of learning in all lessons. Teachers are very knowledgeable in all aspects of the subject and teach lessons that offer all students the opportunity to make progress and at the same time be sufficiently challenged. Staff use the very good facilities for the subject to very good effect. Teachers give very generously of their time to provide a wide range of extra-curricular activities that are very well supported. Students' enjoyment of their lessons is very evident; they particularly enjoy the effective use of a digital camera.

144. Excellent leadership and a positive ethos characterises the management of both the physical education and dance. The departments have a clear and shared vision of the standards it wishes to achieve, and knows how it intends to reach these standards. Relationships within the staff group are very good, and they make well-balanced teams. There is a clear desire to improve on previous best. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection. There has been significant improvement in examination standards and students in Years 10 and 11 can now take a GCSE examination in dance.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

VOCATIONAL STUDIES

145. Health and Social Care was sampled and one lesson was seen in Year 11. The 2004 results were below average. Students achieved well based upon their prior attainment at the end of Year 9. The standard of work seen was below average. Students are able to identify some of the factors that affect self-esteem but are not clear about how these factors influence personal relationships. The teaching is good and students achieve well. Work is assessed effectively and teachers create a supportive, non-threatening environment in which students feel confident to express their views. The leadership and management of the subject are good and the curriculum is well matched to the needs of students.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Provision in citizenship is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students have good opportunities for participation and taking responsible action
- Arrangements for assessing the subject lack rigour
- Some subjects, particularly English, ICT and humanities, provide appropriate citizenship opportunities for students.
- Some subjects do not plan adequately for citizenship opportunities in schemes of work.
- A strong mentoring system supports very well the satisfactory personal and social education programme.

Commentary

146. It is not possible to reach an overall judgement about standards and achievement in citizenship. There is no public examination in the subject, only a few specific citizenship lessons were observed during the inspection and there has been little written work in the subject so far this year. However, in the few lessons observed in Years 7 to 9, where citizenship had a distinct focus, students made good progress in understanding different aspects of society. In English, for example, students examined the issue of prejudice through "Of Mice and Men", and, in geography, students reflected on the effects of global disasters on the coffee trade in Kenya.

147. In the lessons seen teaching and learning was good. Objectives are clear, students understand what is required of them and teachers helped them to develop skills of enquiry and communication. For example students of all abilities were well challenged to take responsibility for their own learning in a Year 7 lesson in ICT on the effects of the Palestinian conflict. As a result learning was good and students made good progress in their understanding of citizenship.

148. Given the movement of staffing recently, the leadership of the subject is good. The Head of Department has had good training and has begun to incorporate the subject more fully into English, ICT and humanities. A departmental audit has been undertaken and is reviewed regularly. There are good opportunities for students to participate and take responsible action throughout the college and in the wider community. The subject is also appropriately developed through assemblies, personal, social and health education, tutorials, work experience, careers and guidance, work in the community (also with charities), the college's council and college elections and the wide range of extra-curricular activities. In addition, the system of prefects allows students to take further responsibility within the college. The college council is an effective channel of communication and there is a wide range of extracurricular activities with high levels of participation. Students are also encouraged to become involved in citizenship activities outside college through charitable events and performances within the local community.

149. Plans to assess and record achievement in the subject have been implemented recently and students in Years 7 to 9 have made good progress in ICT. However because of the patchy nature of the assessment completed on some subjects and not others, it has not been possible to judge how well students have achieved across the curriculum, overall. There are also plans to report on the subject to parents although this has not yet taken place. The key issues now are to ensure that all subjects make citizenship opportunities explicit within their schemes of work and to further develop assessment and reporting procedures in the subject.

150. The college makes satisfactory provision for personal, social and health education. This is taught across the curriculum through a range of subjects. It is supported by the assembly programme which focuses on themes and topics and by special days where visiting speakers and outside agencies contribute. A very extensive and detailed mentoring system works alongside the programme; it ensures that students receive individual attention which enhances their personal development.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

In the inspection, 11 subjects and courses were inspected and are reported on in detail. Work in other subjects and courses was sampled and contributed to the overall picture of teaching and learning in the college.

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2004

Level 3 GCE AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		College	England	College	England	College	England
Biology	2	100	63.5	0	10.4	20	19.8
Chemistry	4	50	70.3	25	13.2	20	23
Communication Studies	4	100	87.2	75	24.9	55	32.8
Dance	4	75	82	25	21.9	30	29.7
Drama	6	100	86.6	0	19.8	30	30.9
English/English Language	5	40	85.3	20	16.1	14	29
Design and Technology	4	75	72.6	25	13.9	32.5	24.3
Information Technology	11	18.2	66.6	9.1	8.8	8.2	20.6
Mathematics	1	100	59.9	0	14.1	40	20.5
Other social studies	3	0	67.8	0	15.1	0	23.2
Sports/PE Studies	3	100	72.2	0	11.8	30	22.8

Level 3 GCE A level and VCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		College	England	College	England	College	England
Dance	1	100	84.3	100	42.6	100	84.3
English/English Language	2	100	99.2	0	36.4	60	81.1
Mathematics	1	100	96.8	0	56.6	80	89.5
Sports/PE studies	3	100	97.8	0	30.9	60	75.4
Business	5	30	91.6	0	24.1	16	67.9
Engineering	1	100	90.6	0	23.5	60	69.6
Health & Social Care	8	62.5	93.5	0	24.9	32.5	70
Leisure and Recreation	3	100	90.7	0	18.3	66.7	64.7
Travel and Tourism	9	100	90.1	11.1	19.6	68.9	64.9

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

English

One period of 'A' level Literature was observed in Year 12 and one period of 'A' level Language and Literature in Years 13. A scrutiny of students' written work was also carried out. 155. Students will be entered for A level Language and Literature for the last time in 2005, with the department having now opted for the A level Literature course.

Provision for 'A' level English is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in the subject are below the national average.
- Good teaching promotes good learning in lessons, though overall achievement is satisfactory.
- Some students take a passive approach to their own learning.
- Lessons are teacher-directed, with too few chances for students to take control of their own learning through well-planned group activities.

Commentary

151. It is expected that students who begin the A level English course have a C grade in GCSE Language and GCSE Literature, though this is not always the case. The majority of students who begin their A level studies have a C grade in English rather than a higher A or B grade. This results in attainment at the beginning of Year 12 being below average. As a result of good teaching and an effective interpretation of the A level syllabus, many students make satisfactory progress in the subject, though the increased demands of the complex texts studied by students results in overall standards in A level examinations being below average. This was reflected in the most recent examinations in 2004 with twenty percent of students gaining an A or B grade in A level Language and Literature.

152. Although a number of students display good oral skills, and are confident in their ability to express their ideas and opinions, an equal number are reluctant to make an active contribution to discussions in lessons and are happy to defer to the opinions of their teachers and the more confident members of the group.

153. Whilst all students have good technical reading skills a number of them read at only at a surface level and have problems in following the subtext and appreciating how writers use language to convey implied ideas and opinions. This was observed in a lesson on Oscar Wilde's '*A Woman Of No Importance*' with some students failing to appreciate Wilde's use of language to imply a personal opinion about Victorian moral hypocrisy and social conventions.

154. A number of students can be seen to be making satisfactory progress in their writing skills in Years 12 and 13, with more able students producing well structured essays, with a strong personal opinion, supported by evidence from the text and well-selected quotations. In contrast to this some students write in an informal manner and have yet to develop a writing style appropriate to A level studies. A number of essays lack a clear sense of direction and purpose, with some students making dogmatic statements, without the evidence to support their ideas and opinions.

155. The quality of teaching in the two lessons observed was good, with resources, including the use of interactive whiteboards being used to good effect to promote and extend students' learning and understanding. Evidence from observations and students' written work indicate that the majority of lessons are teacher directed, with too few chances for students to take control of their own learning through well-planned group activities.

156. Leadership and management of the subject are good, with the department having an appropriate range of documentation, including schemes of work to support teachers in the deliver of the subject.

157. There are a good range of assessment procedures in place, with one-to-one discussions between teachers and students ensuring that they have a clear understanding of what they need to do in order to improve the quality of their work.

158. A level English was not offered at the time of the last inspection. It is not therefore possible to make a judgement on improvement in the subject.

MATHEMATICS

Provision for mathematics in the sixth-form is **satisfactory**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are very good in the A level courses, teachers have thorough subject knowledge and use innovative methods.
- Students are committed and enthusiastic, but groups are very small, with a low level of attainment on entry to the course.
- Leadership and management are good, the two acting heads of department are coping very well, and are planning for more diverse courses geared better to the ability of students.

Commentary

159. Results in 2004 were too few for national comparisons, with one 'A' level and one AS result, both passes. The present two Year 13 students are repeating their AS modules to obtain better grades this year, as the previous year's teaching was unsatisfactorily disrupted, and although standards are below national expectations, achievement this year is good. The present Year 12 students, two female and three male, are progressing well on their Pure 2 module, after achieving grades in Pure 1 equal to national averages. Statistics is the third module, with good standards, building on previous knowledge and experience, from GCSE (or equivalent for the majority of foreign students). GCSE re-sit classes are also held, and were sampled to show good achievement through good teaching, although standards are low and attendance fluctuates.

160. Teaching of the A level mathematics course is very good, from the two acting heads of department, who have thorough knowledge of their subject. Lessons are structured well with a variety of learning activities, which involve and interest the students, and develop them personally and socially. Some interesting starting activities are planned, as well as review of previous lessons and homework, always a crisp, purposeful start stimulating students to think mathematically. Relationships are very good, with evident mutual respect, and appreciation, and students collaborate well with each other and the teacher. Discussion is used very well to develop students' understanding, and the effective use of correct mathematical terminology. The 'smart' interactive whiteboards are used well to maintain a fast pace, although handwriting on the boards is counter-productive. Assessment is good, through regular tests as well as on-going through each lesson, relating students work to the examination criteria.

161. Leadership and management of mathematics are good, but in a state of flux due to the absence through ill health of the head of department. Appropriate vision helps the drive to improve the department and raise standards, as well as plan for the future for courses more appropriate to students wishing to continue studying mathematics in some form. There have been too few students with GCSE higher grades to produce viable sized groups to study A level mathematics. Documentation is thorough, although citizenship and work-related learning are not yet explicit in schemes of work or lesson plans. Resources are satisfactory although students do not yet have their own up to date text-book, and ICT use is infrequent. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory, although further development is needed.

Mathematics across the curriculum

162. A training session took place two years ago on numeracy across the curriculum, but with no development since. Informal contacts exist, and appropriate advice is given when needed. Very good use of mathematical skills was seen in Psychology A level, and numeracy competence in Business Studies and Science. Students' skills were satisfactory for the demands of most subjects.

163. Evidence of the use of mathematics was less than normally seen in sixth-form subjects. At present there is no numeracy co-ordinator, or whole college monitoring or evaluation.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision for Information and Communication Technology in the sixth form is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A good choice of three levels of certification is offered in ICT.
- Current standards are in line with the national average
- Many students' achievement in ICT is good. However, in the most recent results a third of students were ungraded.
- Teaching is consistently good.
- Leadership and management in ICT is good.
- The use of ICT across their subjects by students is good.

Commentary

164. AS and A level IT courses are offered in the sixth form as well as the European Computer Driving Licence (ECDL). The most recent results at AS level were in line with the national average in the higher grades although a third of students were ungraded. Current standards of work on the AS and A2 courses are broadly in line with the national standard for this subject with the majority likely to achieve grades A* to E. This represents good achievement for many students.

165. Students can create a data processing application for a company by programming a spreadsheet application and document each stage of the project. They can similarly analyse, design and build a database solution for a retail unit, and test and evaluate the end product. Some project work is of a very high standard. On the ECDL course students with no prior qualification in ICT were seen to construct advanced spreadsheet functions, indicating good achievement.

166. The teaching is consistently good. Theoretical work is systematically taught, with all lessons underpinned by presentation slides and notes. Lessons are well organised and careful attention is given to ensuring that students understand the criteria for gaining higher grades. Most students have developed good skills of independent learning and make use of a text book and intranet resources to guide their studies. Others however are coping less well with having responsibility for their own learning and teachers work with them in planning their study programmes. Teachers offer effective guidance on improving coursework and have established very good working relationships. Extra time for supporting students' studies is offered during holiday periods. Students have an opportunity each year to visit New York for lectures on high level modelling.

167. Leadership for ICT is good. The courses offer different levels and types of accreditation and the commitment of teachers ensures that students get value from their studies. Resources, including books and intranet sources are good. The management of ICT is good. All course materials are accessible on the intranet by teachers and students. New staff are well supported by the established systems. Assessment is used effectively to track students' progress.

168. The use of ICT across their studies by students is good. They have access to their own ICT area and this is well used for research and writing up course and project work. ICT is influencing the

quality of content and presentation of many students' work across most subjects. Many students have access to ICT at home and this allows continuity in the use of this medium.

ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING

Product Design

Provision in product design is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well in relation to their previous attainment at GCSE.
- Teaching and learning are good.
- Students can carry out investigations on new materials.
- A few students experience difficulty moving up from GCSE to AS Level.
- Design folios generally are not well presented.

Commentary

169. Two courses are offered, GCE AS and 'A' Level Product Design: Graphics with Resistant Materials Technology. Results in examinations in 2004 show students achieve well in relation to their prior attainment but national comparisons are inappropriate due to low numbers on courses.

170. Both courses are taught together because of the low number of students involved. Some extra lesson time is given to students taking 'A' Level. (In the work seen, students, most of whom had very low grades in GCSE technology subjects, standards are low but represent good achievement for the students involved. However, a gifted student is achieving well and is predicted a grade in the higher range at 'A' Level. His work contains examples of high quality design drawings produced with the aid of sophisticated computer software specially acquired by the college to help him. Students can work well in pairs to investigate the properties of a range of new materials provided by the teacher. As a result of testing students were able to suggest possible manufacturing opportunities for these materials. Students make good use of ICT to design and manufacture products. The higher ability students produce work which shows flair and bears a unique identity. Coursework folios of many students lack quality presentation and a few have difficulty at AS Level in making the leap from GCSE standards to a higher level. The weak literacy of most students is a hindrance when trying to communicate design development.

171. Teaching and learning are good. Classroom relationships are a positive contributory factor to good achievement. Teaching groups are small and students receive a lot of individual attention well matched to their particular needs so that learning is good. Both courses are very well planned and students have good support materials which help to foster independent learning. Teachers assess work thoroughly. Students receive good support and guidance from teachers so that they understand how to improve. They need to see examples of what constitutes high quality work in order to widen their horizons. Students hold positive views of the subject and consider it to be an asset to future career aspirations.

172. Leadership and management of the subject are good. The new product design course which has been introduced since the previous inspection adds breadth to the curriculum. The work of the subject is reviewed and analysed and it is recognised that an increase in the number of students opting would provide positive benefits.

173. Improvement since the previous inspection is good as sixth form design and technology is a comparatively recent addition to the sixth form curriculum and was not reported last time.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

The provision for Media Studies is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching in the subject results in very good achievement, with students gaining above average grades in their A/S examinations at the end of Year 12.
- Students display positive attitudes to the subject and have a very good working relationship with their teacher.
- The subject makes a good contribution to students' social, cultural and personal development.
- There are no chances for students to visit media establishments in order to widen their knowledge of the commercial aspect of the world of media.

Commentary

174. Although some students have studied the subject at GCSE level, this is not always the case. A number of students also gain a C grade in the subject, rather than a higher A or B grade. This results in attainment upon entry to A level Media Studies being below average. As a result of good teaching and an interesting and demanding curriculum, students make very good achievement in the subject, with progress over time likewise being very good. This was reflected in the most recent AS examinations in 2004 when all students achieved a B grade.

175. The two lessons observed in Year 12 focussed on film and television documentaries; they indicated the students' enthusiasm for the subject and the good working relationship they had with their teacher.

176. The quality of teaching in the subject is good, with the subject leader's very good media knowledge being used to good effect to extend students' knowledge, skills and understanding. The Head of Media Studies is particularly good at using an imaginative range of resources, in particular, videos of documentaries and films to support and extend students' learning.

177. Leadership and management of the subject are good. The Head of A level Media Studies has put into place a range of documentation and a good scheme of work to support students in their learning and to cover all areas of the A level curriculum. Although the department has a good links with Bournemouth University, with access to media specialists, there are no opportunities for students to visit commercial media establishments in order to extend their wider knowledge of the subject. With the chance for students to explore a range of world and contemporary issues as reflected in the media, the subject makes a valuable contribution to students' moral, social and cultural development.

178. A level Media Studies was not offered at the time of the last inspection. It is therefore not possible to make a judgement about improvement in the subject.

Art and design

Provision for art and design in the sixth form is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Versatile and knowledgeable staff support students well across a wide range of art activities.
- Students are very clear about how well they are doing and how to improve as a result of very good assessment procedures.
- Good leadership and management have established a clear direction for the new sixth form course.

Commentary

179. The A level course is in its first year. The students all entered the course with above average results at GCSE. Standards in the work seen are well above the expectations for this stage of the course suggesting good achievement so far. Research and development of ideas in sketchbooks are extensive and very well presented. Students refer to a wide range of sources in their researches with a refreshing emphasis on contemporary and lesser known artists. Finished pieces show very high levels of individuality and perception with examples of very effective use of ICT and innovative three dimensional work.

180. The quality of teaching and learning is good. The teachers make effective use of their personal experiences as practising artists to set a good level of challenge appropriate to the students' abilities. Well-chosen speakers from local arts organisations effectively extend students' understanding of art and design beyond the usual college perspective. Students are encouraged to discuss and evaluate their own and others' work to develop and share their understanding of ideas as well as techniques. Day-to-day assessments are very effective through individual tutorials and target setting. Procedures for recording and tracking students' progress are very good.

181. Leadership and management of art and design in the sixth form are good. The recently launched AS level course is well organised to build on students' GCSE experiences. The new leadership is establishing a distinctive character for the course that sets students' work in the context of the wider world of contemporary art. Systems for monitoring students' progress have been effectively adopted from the GCSE course creating a secure structure for further development.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

Physical education

The provision of physical education in the sixth form is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well and standards are in line with those attained nationally.
- Very good teaching with high expectations promotes very good learning.
- Students respond very positively to teaching and are highly motivated learners.
- Some students do not take sufficient responsibility for their own learning.

Commentary

182. Since September 2001 the college has been providing sixth form students with the opportunity to take 'A' level courses in physical education and dance. In 2004 the small number of students taking the A2 level examination gained results that were in line with the national average. In the AS examinations in 2004 all students obtained pass grades that were again in line with that achieved nationally. There were no significant differences in the standards attained by male and female students.

183. Inspection evidence shows that students at present in Years 12 and 13 are achieving well and producing work that is at least in line with that seen nationally with some very able students producing work at the highest level. Work folders are very well organized and demonstrate that the demands of the A level syllabi are being met. Students are able to ask perceptive questions of their teachers using appropriate technical language. Most are articulate and can convey their views very effectively. Views are often vigorously expressed, challenged and defended, although students are very tolerant of each other's views. In September 2004 the college began offering sixth form students the opportunity to take a B.Tech National Certificate in Sport (Outdoor education). A very enthusiastic group of students have taken up this offer. They are achieving very well and are producing work that is in line with that attained nationally.

184. The quality of the teaching on the physical education and dance courses is at least very good and sometimes excellent. Lessons are very well planned, with clear objectives that are shared with students. Teachers know their subject very well, demonstrating a high level of scholarship and a keen awareness of their students' learning needs. Assignment work is demanding. Teachers know their students well, and are aware of their strengths and weaknesses and are skilled at asking just the right questions in order to prompt thought and enter discussions. The 'A' level dance students are very enthusiastic about the course and work hard to improve their techniques. Their ability to plan and choreograph is well developed alongside their ability to critically appraise their own and others performance. Their attainment is above the national average.

185. Attendance at the lessons is high. Students respond very positively to the high quality teaching. They show a real rapport with their teachers and relationships are very good. However, students do rely heavily on their teachers who work hard for them, and some in lessons students do not take sufficient responsibility for their own learning. The subjects are excellently led and managed. Teachers involved in the sixth form course work well together, sharing views on successful ways of teaching, and show a very strong commitment to their students. At the time of the previous inspection A level subjects in physical education and dance were not being offered.

BUSINESS

Business Studies

Provision in business studies is **good**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have strong subject expertise
- The teaching is good overall
- Students have insufficient contacts with businesses
- Low attendance is having an effect on the attainment and progress of some students

Commentary

186. Currently the department has 3 courses on offer: the AVCE in business, the BTEC in E-business and the BTEC in public service. In year 2004, 1 student was entered for the AVCE. This student received an E grade. No students were entered for the other two courses in year 2004. In year 2003, 8 students were entered for the E-business exam. All students gained a pass grade. The standards of work seen during the inspection are broadly in line with the levels expected nationally. However in the cases of the students who do not attend on a regular basis, the standards of attainment are below this. For the students who do attend regularly, these students can make confident reference to the central issues of the particular syllabus that they follow. For example, the AVCE students have a good knowledge and understanding of management styles, business reports and quality assurance controls. The E-business students can make intelligent reference to the principles of internet marketing and they understand how internet marketing can benefit the customer. Students on the public service course know what skills are required to work in that sector, and they understand the importance of careful preparation for any outside activities that they might undertake. Across the courses as a whole, students have strong skills in information technology. The achievement of the students who attend on a regular basis is good. Students who have special educational needs make good progress as do the more and less able students.

187. Overall the teaching is good. All lessons are well planned and include a wide range of learning objectives. Teachers are very knowledgeable in the subject matter. This expertise is a very significant aspect of the teaching. The level of work that is set for students is appropriate to their abilities. At times the pace of some lessons is a little slow and more learning could be done in the time available. Students are attentive and well behaved, but they tend to lose concentration during some presentations by the teachers. Sometimes teachers fail to encourage more of the students to become engaged in the activities of the lesson. Teachers often make reference to real business

scenarios that are occurring in the news on TV. This is a good source of learning for the students. Students have insufficient opportunities themselves to go out and learn from real business situations. The teaching makes a very good contribution to helping students develop their skills in information technology and numeracy. The teaching also makes a good contribution to aspects of learning about citizenship as well as work-related learning. An active assessment policy is in place.

188. The leadership and management are good. The staffing is very good as teachers bring a breadth of experience from business situations. The resources are good. The accommodation is very good with a purpose built suite and ready access to information technology. Business studies was not reported on at the last inspection so no comment can be made on progress since that time.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

Provision in health and social care is **good**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good leadership and management ensure that the course and its delivery are well matched to the needs of students.
- Teaching is good and students achieve well.
- Students' work is assessed well and students know what they need to do to improve.

Commentary

189. The 2004 Vocational Certificate of Education results were well below average. Students obtained the grades expected of them based upon their attainment levels at the end of Year 11. The General National Vocational Qualifications results for 2004 were below average and students gained the results expected of them based upon their GCSE results at the end of Year 11. The GNVQ results overall based on the last three years have been above average and students have achieved well. The groups observed during the inspection of this subject consisted of all female students.

190. During the week of the inspection, no teaching of VCE was seen and no work was available for analysis, as the one remaining student on this course was not present. The standard of work seen in the recently introduced Council for Awards in Children's' Care and Education was average. Most students are able to discuss issues relating to the delivery of food menus for young children, giving reasons for their strategies based upon research rather than opinion. The standard of work seen for the GNVQ was average. Students are able to calculate the daily energy requirements for different sex, age and occupational groups in a fair systematic way. A few of the students are able to compare two of the groups' requirements fairly using appropriate controls. Students' use of ICT is good and supports their learning well.

191. Teaching is good overall. Teachers are enthusiastic and inspire students. Lessons are well planned and include a variety of activities that enable students to work independently. Work is assessed thoroughly and students know what they need to do to improve. As a result students are well motivated, work hard and achieve well. Students take a pride in their work and assemble well presented portfolios that include significant elements of their own research.

192. The subject is well led and managed. The head of department has a clear vision for raising standards and the department works well together as an effective team. Systems for monitoring student progress are in place and teaching and learning are monitored on an informal basis. Innovative leadership of the curriculum has taken place and has led to the recent introduction of a health education course for advanced studies. This, together with the GNVQ course, matches the needs and learning styles of the students well. The curriculum is enriched by many outside visits to other establishments such as nursing homes and child care centres and offers students many opportunities to link what they study in class to real life and the world of work.

193. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Through improved teaching, students acquire a more critical grasp of the issues they encounter. Students' now make better progress in the GNVQ courses and learn how to work independently.

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND GENERAL PROGRAMMES

Psychology

Provision in psychology is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students do not attend all lessons which is affecting student achievement.
- There is inconsistency in student examination performance.
- Over dependence on the teacher is lowering initiative and personal responsibility.
- Clear learning objectives are set for each lesson.
- Recording, analysis and review are taking place regularly.

Commentary

194. The standards of work seen during the inspection are just satisfactory. Students are welcomed into psychology on the basis of their willingness to learn and apply themselves to the subject. A basic competence in English and Maths is necessary to underpin the prospect of success in exam study. Few students demonstrate this basic competence. Psychology is a new subject for students entering the sixth form. Most students demonstrate a tendency to describe rather than evaluate which is a common limitation on students' writing skills. Extra reading which is essential for success is not being undertaken.

195. The most recently published examination results, though based on small numbers, are below average. The teacher is aware that students are not achieving as well as they might. Predicted grades for 2005 are good.

196. The quality of teaching is good and learning is satisfactory. All lessons have clear objectives that are shared with the students. The course handbooks and schemes of work indicate that a variety of teaching and learning styles are employed. Students are given the opportunity to carry out group, pair and individual work in a variety of genres, including written and non-written. There are a variety of printed, electronic and personal resources available. The teacher accepts the responsibility to foster independent study. However, students are inclined to depend on the teacher too much and do not use their initiative or take personal responsibility for their learning sufficiently. There are work targets, levels at which students are expected to work. Few students fully engage in this adult learning which is essential in the retention, application and evaluation of psychology.

197. Work is marked quickly with full written feedback. Tests are set regularly to confirm knowledge of the course content. Work is differentiated as appropriate to take account of the varying needs of different students. The higher attaining students show a positive attitude, a willingness to work hard, and a wish to succeed. However, a minority of work seen does not use psychological terms or they are used, but erroneously. The writing produced by students is list-like with little attempt to understand what has been written; there is little use of elaboration, clarification or example.

198. Leadership and management are satisfactory. There is one teacher of psychology. The teacher has effective and efficient procedures to run the subject. Information is shared and used effectively. The subject has clear, well publicised and understood aims, with clear objectives.

Sociology

Provision in sociology is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There are inconsistencies in individual performance across the subject range.
- Students cannot apply their learning to different contexts.
- Social issues are explored in appropriate situations and contexts using the personal experiences of students.
- Extra-curricular and additional experiences for students are geared to social and cultural ideas.

Commentary

199. Standards of work seen during the inspection are satisfactory. These standards are achieved because the teacher pays attention to language development needs. Sociology is a new subject to Year 12 students who need to gain a good comprehension of subject related concepts and vocabulary. The work is well planned, clearly structured and for the higher attaining student it motivates and enhances interest. The variable quality of work produced is due to a lack of ICT resources, frequent minor crises such as undue time invested in chasing the submission of work, and the underachievement resulting from the lack of writing skills.

200. There are good records of student achievement and progress. The teacher debates with students in order to assess the level, certainty and range of their knowledge of sociology. The most recent results of national examinations are well below average. There is inconsistency in students' performances from year to year and there are indications of unexplored potential. The standards achieved are not commensurate with the age and capabilities of these students. A minority of students are not interested or engaged in their work, and their concentration is not sustained. A majority respond appropriately to their tasks.

201. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. A minority of students are over dependent on their teacher and make uncritical use of resources. The teacher is enthusiastic to talk about sociology. The quality of social development of a majority of students is good. They understand the structures and processes of society; they are aware of the opportunities for them to exercise responsibility in the wider community. A strength of the teaching is the provision of additional experiences for students geared to social and cultural issues. The range of the teaching techniques used and their fitness for purpose to raise the standards of work is good.

202. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Evaluation uses clear criteria, recording and analysis take place, and there is accurate assessment for moderation purposes. There are plans to provide extra experiences to complement the written curriculum. The procedures arranged allow the teaching of sociology to operate effectively.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Sixth form grade</i>	<i>College grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the sixth form and the college	3	3
How inclusive the college is		1
How the college's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	3	3
Cost effectiveness of the sixth form / value for money provided by the college	3	3
Overall standards achieved		5
Students' achievement	3	3
Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities		3
Attendance	4	4
Attitudes	3	3
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2	3
Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development		3
The quality of education provided by the college		3
The quality of teaching	3	3
How well students learn	3	3
The quality of assessment	2	2
How well the curriculum meets students needs	2	2
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-college activities		2
Accommodation and resources	4	4
Students' care, welfare, health and safety		2
Support, advice and guidance for students	2	2
How well the college seeks and acts on students' views	2	2
The effectiveness of the college's links with parents		3
The quality of the college's links with the community	3	3
The college's links with other colleges	3	2
The leadership and management of the college		2
The governance of the college	2	2
The leadership of the headteacher		1
The leadership of other key staff	2	2
The effectiveness of management	2	3

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