

INSPECTION REPORT

BOSWORTH COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Desford, Leicester

LEA area: Leicestershire

Unique reference number: 120266

Headteacher: Ms Sue Rothwell

Reporting inspector: Marianne Ellender-Gelé
2348

Dates of inspection: 24 – 28 March 2003

Inspection number: 251199

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE COLLEGE

Type of college: Comprehensive

College category: Community

Age range of students: 14 - 19

Gender of students: Mixed

College address: Leicester Lane

Desford

Leicester

Postcode:

LE9 9JL

Telephone number: 01455 - 822841

Fax number: 01455 - 828194

Appropriate authority: Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Stuart Annan

Date of previous inspection: 13 January 1997

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| 2348 | Marianne Ellender-Gelé | Registered inspector | | What sort of college is it? The college's results and achievements What should the college do to improve further? |
| 9865 | Sue Howley | Lay inspector | | Students' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the college care for its students? How well does the college work in partnership with parents? How well is the college led and managed? |
| 11830 | Jonathan Banks | Team inspector | Modern foreign languages | How good are curricular and other opportunities offered to students? |
| 12008 | David Bray | Team inspector | Music | How well are students taught? |
| 6798 | Sylvia Gibson | Team inspector | English | |
| 3695 | Michael Lovett | Team inspector | Mathematics | |
| 10327 | Phil Garnham | Team inspector | Sixth form biology | Social and cultural development |
| 12968 | Jon Parker | Team inspector | Design and technology | |
| 8119 | David Milham | Team inspector | Information and communication technology | |
| 22036 | Ian Macsporrán | Team inspector | History | |
| 32780 | Paul Craine | Team inspector | Geography | |
| 12969 | Ian Middleton | Team inspector | Art | |
| 32591 | Gillian Harrison | Team inspector | Physical education | |
| 19032 | John Howard | Team inspector | Religious education | Spiritual and moral development |
| 15594 | Janice Felce | Team inspector | Citizenship Business studies | |

| | | | | |
|-------|----------------|----------------|---|---|
| 19858 | John Follett | Team inspector | Sociology Special educational needs English as an additional language | |
| 10170 | Tony Drane | Team inspector | Media studies Theatre studies Film studies | |
| 31115 | Kenneth Perris | Team inspector | Sixth form mathematics | |
| 11926 | Alan Alder | Team inspector | Science | |
| 17132 | Julie Copas | Team inspector | Health and social care Psychology | Leadership and management of the sixth form |
| 10228 | Susan Russam | Team inspector | Unit for visually impaired students | |

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE COLLEGE

Bosworth Community College is a larger-than-average college with 1249 students, aged 14 to 19, on roll. It is oversubscribed. The college serves a wide area to the west of Leicester, which includes students from Leicester City and from rural villages as far afield as the Warwickshire border. Most students travel to the college by bus. The sixth form is larger than average, with 359 students on roll. There are twenty more students in Year 11 than in Year 10, and twenty-five more boys than girls across Years 10 and 11. Attainment on entry into Year 10 represents the full spread of ability, and is better than average overall in mathematics and science. Attainment on entry is slightly below average in English, particularly for boys. There are some very able students at the college. The percentage of students with special educational needs (SEN), including those with a statement of SEN, is average. The Local Education Authority makes special provision for students with a visual impairment. The four visually impaired students currently on roll are integrated fully into mainstream classes. Students come from a diverse range of social backgrounds, with the majority from favourable backgrounds. The percentage of students who are entitled to free school meals is below average. Most students are from a white British background and the number for whom English is not the first language is low. The college has been successful in its application to become a specialist Sports College from September 2003.

HOW GOOD THE COLLEGE IS

The overall effectiveness of the college is good. The college is led well. Clear educational direction and high aspirations are promoted by the principal, the senior team and the governing body. Day-to-day management is good and the climate for learning is positive. Students develop their study skills effectively by the time they leave the college. Overall, standards achieved are at least satisfactory, although more able students underperform in some subjects, and GCSE results at grades A*-C are too low. The income per student is below the national average. The college provides satisfactory value for money for students in Years 10 and 11 and good value for money for students in the sixth form.

What the college does well

- The principal and governors provide good educational leadership and clear strategic direction.
- The quality of provision and outcomes achieved in the sixth form are strengths.
- Relationships between students and with their teachers are very good. Students are well behaved and mature. They demonstrate high levels of commitment to their studies.
- Provision for students with special educational needs is good and for those who have a visual impairment it is very good.
- Procedures to monitor academic and personal welfare of students are effective.
- Senior managers have developed good systems to monitor data, review overall progress and set faculty targets for improvement.

What could be improved

- In Years 10 and 11, achievement in mathematics, modern foreign languages and religious education.
- The quality of learning opportunities to increase the rate of progress of gifted and talented students and of boys.
- Spiritual development and understanding of cultural diversity.

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

HOW THE COLLEGE HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Since the previous inspection in 1997, a new principal and new chair of governors have been appointed. They have been successful in addressing most of the key issues identified in the 1997 report. Progress overall has been good. Examination results have improved and, over the last three years, they reached the national average. Teaching is much improved, with pace and expectation in lessons better than the 1997 report indicates. Behaviour and attitudes to learning are now very positive. Assessment

procedures have improved and the use of data to set targets is much better. Targets do not focus sufficiently on learning. Heads of subjects and heads of faculty are aware of their responsibilities and accountability. The monitoring of strengths and weaknesses is done well, but in some subjects actions following analysis have yet to have an impact on achievements. Provision for students with special educational needs is good. Attendance is now satisfactory. Provision for religious education and for promoting spirituality and understanding of cultural diversity remain to be addressed.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by students at the end of Year 11 and students at the end of Year 13 based on average point scores in GCSE and A-level/AS-level examinations.

| Performance in: | compared with | | | |
|--------------------|---------------|------|------|-----------------|
| | all schools | | | similar schools |
| | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 | 2002 |
| GCSE examinations | C | C | C | E |
| A-levels/AS-levels | A | A | n/a | |

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

The average point score in GCSE results has remained in line with the national average over the last three years and has matched the national upward trend. Boys' results are not improving sufficiently and, in 2002, the difference compared with girls' results was wider than the national figure. When comparing the 2002 GCSE results with results achieved by the same students in their Year 9 National Curriculum tests (taken in 2000) results at A* to G grades are as expected, but are lower than expected at the higher A*-C grades. Caution is required with this analysis as students do not take the Year 9 tests at the College but in three different contributory schools. The target set for 2002 was achieved. However, the college is aware of the lower-than-expected results; more challenging targets have been set for 2003. The college is on track to achieve these. Students on non-GCSE courses attain well and gain worthwhile accreditation.

In mathematics, modern foreign languages and science the rate of progress is too slow, often due to lack of challenge for specific teaching groups. In several subjects, high-attaining students, particularly boys, do not achieve as well as they should. Standards in religious education are poor due to insufficient teaching time given to this subject. Progress of students with special educational needs and students who have visual impairment is good.

Results in the sixth form are well above average.

STUDENTS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

| Aspect | Comment |
|--|---|
| Attitudes to the school | Good. Students are positive about the college and want to learn. They respond well to their teachers and are keen to engage in discussions and activities |
| Behaviour, in and out of classrooms | Good. At lesson changeover, students move along the very narrow corridors in a sensible manner. There is little oppressive behaviour or bullying. |
| Personal development and relationships | Good. Relationships are very good. Personal development is good. Students take responsibility for their learning, are confident and mature. |
| Attendance | Satisfactory. The great majority of students want to attend. Despite the college's effort, the rate of unauthorised absence is high, due, in part, to term-time holidays and some truancy. The poor attendance of a small minority of students has a negative impact on their learning. Punctuality to college and lessons is good. |

TEACHING AND LEARNING

| Teaching of students: | Years 10 – 11 | Years 12 – 13 |
|-----------------------|---------------|---------------|
| Quality of teaching | Satisfactory | Good |

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

Students in Years 10 and 11 make efforts to learn, and concentration is good. They are productive and their awareness of their own knowledge is satisfactory. Teaching is good in English and satisfactory in science. Whilst some good teaching was observed in specific lessons in mathematics and modern foreign languages, there are too many shortcomings and, overall, teaching is unsatisfactory; consequently learning in these subjects is too slow. In several subjects, gifted and talented students are not sufficiently challenged and they underachieve, particularly boys. Strengths of teaching include teachers' subject knowledge, awareness of examinations criteria and use of time and support staff. Literacy is taught well, but numeracy is not sufficiently reinforced across subjects. The teaching and learning of students who have special educational needs and those who have visual impairment are good. In the sixth form, teaching and learning are sound in art and good in all other subjects.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE COLLEGE

| Aspect | Comment |
|---|--|
| The quality and range of the curriculum | Satisfactory. The curriculum is broad and relevant to students' needs. The college achieves its aim to provide a comprehensive curriculum and to offer choice for the individual. Provision for extra-curricular activities is satisfactory. |
| Provision for students with special educational needs | Good. Students have full access to the curriculum and are supported very well in lessons. Provision for students who have visual impairment is very good. |
| Provision for students' personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | Unsatisfactory. Provision for social and moral development is good, but provision for spiritual development and awareness of cultural diversity is weak. |
| How well the school cares for its students | Good. Students' welfare needs are met well by tutors. Assessment procedures are good, but targets set for students are not yet sufficiently focused on what they need to learn to improve. |

The college works well with parents; attendance at information evenings is good and links with parents are effective. Staff work hard to involve parents when there are concerns and also notify them when students do well. Teachers, tutors and support staff demonstrate high levels of care for students. Particular strengths in curricular provision are: the broad range of GCSEs offered and provision for students with learning, behavioural and physical difficulties. The college works hard to overcome the difficulties experienced by students who live a considerable distance away from the college to access extra-curricular activities.

HOW WELL THE COLLEGE IS LED AND MANAGED

| Aspect | Comment |
|--|---|
| Leadership and management by the principal and other key staff | Good. The principal provides dynamic and purposeful leadership. She promotes high expectations for all students and staff. The senior team and pastoral leaders deliver their responsibilities well and provide good day-to-day management support. The effectiveness of heads of subjects is good overall; however, in a few areas, actions are not consistently focused on increasing challenge in teaching |

| | |
|--|---------------|
| | and learning. |
|--|---------------|

| | |
|--|---|
| How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities | Good. Governors have a broad range of experience and effective links with the community. They are well informed of the college's strengths and weaknesses. Statutory duties are not met fully in information and communication technology (ICT), religious education and collective worship. Governors have been very active and successful in securing specialist sports status for the college from September 2003. |
| The college's evaluation of its performance | Satisfactory. The leadership team and governors monitor and evaluate the college's performance well. The analysis of data to raise overall standards is a strength. The effectiveness of subsequent actions has yet to materialise in some subject areas, with impact on standards and provision not always high enough. |
| The strategic use of resources | Good. The college manages a very tight budget well. Accounts are kept effectively. Appropriate value for money is achieved when placing contracts for purchases. Tight and challenging accommodation is constantly being improved. There are some shortages in resources, including the number of available computers. Recruitment difficulties have been managed effectively but have had an impact on continuity and quality of teaching. |

Key strengths in leadership are the qualities of the principal and governors, the high level of commitment of senior staff and the professional expertise of support staff. Day-to-day management of subjects is good. A major weakness continues to be the lack of provision for religious education and for the spiritual and multi-cultural development of students. These issues were also identified in the 1997 inspection report. The senior team and governors have the capacity and the will to improve further.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE COLLEGE Only 14 per cent of parents returned the questionnaire and twenty attended the pre-inspection meeting.

| What pleases parents most | What parents would like to see improved |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students enjoy their studies and like the college. • Students make good progress. • Parents feel comfortable approaching staff if they need information or have concerns. • The college helps students mature. • The college expects students to work hard. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homework is either not set or too much is given at once. • Better information about their child's progress. • Closer working between the college and parents. • A more interesting range of activities. |

Inspectors support the positive views of parents, although more able students make insufficient progress in some subjects. The college provides regular reports to parents, but comments on progress made are limited. Inspectors do not support the views that the college does not work closely with parents. Senior staff and teachers are accessible, and opportunities for parents to discuss progress with teachers and tutors are appropriate. However, it is unsatisfactory to restrict parents to only six appointments at annual consultations. Homework setting is satisfactory overall, although some students need help in managing the workload and timelines.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

Bosworth Community College has a larger-than-average sixth form. Over half of Year 11 students continue in Year 12, and a number of students from other local colleges choose to pursue their sixth-form studies at Bosworth. The sixth form has 359 students, with an equal number of boys and girls. Numbers have increased since the previous inspection. The number of students for whom English is not the first language is low. The curriculum offers twenty-three advanced supplementary and A-level subjects. There are eight vocational courses, six at level 2 and two at advanced level. Students can access courses organised for the community and adults can join students on day courses. Entry requirements into the sixth form are wide to ensure that students' needs are met. Students with special educational needs have full access to relevant courses. Students with visual impairment are integrated fully in courses of their choice. Students on A-level courses have obtained five grades A*-C at GCSE.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

Students achieve very good examination results, well above national averages. These high standards have been maintained over time. Students make good progress and achievement is in keeping with students' good GCSE performance prior to sixth form studies. Many students gain the qualifications they need for either employment or further studies in higher education and universities. The quality of teaching is good and course provision is evolving to meet students' aspirations. The sixth form is well led, with effective systems to ensure good day-to-day management and appropriate delegation of responsibilities. Taking into account the costs and the standards achieved, the sixth form provides good value for money.

Strengths

- Results are well above average and students make good progress.
- The quality of teaching is good. Teachers' subject knowledge is particularly high.
- Relationships are very good. Students demonstrate very positive attitudes to learning. They are motivated and work very hard.
- The sixth form is well led. Principles and policies support effectively the college's ethos, aims and values, particularly those emphasising lifelong learning and high achievement.
- The range of subjects leading to AS and A-level examinations is very wide. The enrichment programme is good.
- There are effective links with other local colleges for students who wish to pursue courses not offered in the sixth form.
- The academic monitoring of students is good. Consequently, students do not drop out and completion rate is high.
- Students who have special educational needs and those who have visual impairment are integrated very well and make good progress.

What could be improved

- Active participation of all students in the life of the sixth form and the college.
- Provision for vocational education and for students on one-year courses is too narrow.
- Provision for religious education and spiritual development is weak.

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

THE QUALITY OF PROVISION IN INDIVIDUAL CURRICULUM AREAS

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

| Curriculum area | Overall judgement about provision, with comment |
|------------------------|---|
| Mathematics | Good. Results are above the national average and teaching and learning are good. Assessment does not always inform students of what they need to do to improve. |
| Biology | Good. Results follow a rising trend. Teaching is good and students learn well. |
| Design and technology | Good. Results are in line with the national average. Teaching is good and students make good progress. The course offers opportunity for individual creativity. |
| Business | Good. Results are above average. Current students have good understanding and learn effectively. Teaching provides students with regular and effective feedback on standards. |
| Information technology | Very good. Recent results were within the top quarter of schools nationally. Students produce high quality coursework. Teaching is very good, particularly due to teachers' detailed knowledge of the subject and very good planning. |
| Physical education | Good. Results are above average. Teaching is good and students demonstrate high levels of interest and enthusiasm. |
| Health and social care | Good. Achievement is very good and results on Advanced GNVQ have been very good. Relationships are good and teaching is challenging. |
| Art and design | Good. Results are slightly above average. Teaching is sound overall, with some good features such as the high level of challenge and the helpful feedback to students. |
| Theatre studies | Good. Students achieve well and results are above average. Teaching is good overall, with some very good features. Students are very committed and confident. |
| Film studies | Very good. Results are high. Teaching is very good and students enjoy both the academic demands and the deep involvement with film. |
| Geography | Good. Results and standards are above average. Teaching is good and students enjoy the course. They value the good quality of residential fieldwork. |
| Sociology | Very good. Students achieve well and teaching is very good. Students develop good independent learning skills and become critical thinkers. |
| Psychology | Very good. Standards are high and psychology is a popular subject. Students achieve well. Teaching is very good with much challenge in lessons. |
| English | Good. Students make good progress and respond well to the good teaching. They value the commitment and knowledge of their teachers. |
| French | Good. Teaching is good and students achieve well. They gain in confidence in speaking and listening. They write about and discuss topical issues well. |

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

| Aspect | Comment |
|--|--|
| How well students are guided and supported | Good. Staff know students well as individuals. Relationships are very good. Pastoral arrangements work well. Not all students are sufficiently aware of the steps they might take to achieve targeted grades and improve their rate of progress. The tutorial programme and enrichment studies provide good support. |
| Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form | Good. The leadership is effective in promoting and maintaining high standards of achievement. Senior managers use assessment information well to monitor students' performance. Subject management is strong, and the proportion of students who complete their courses successfully is high. |

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

| What students like about the sixth form | What they feel could be improved |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Courses suit their talents. • Teachers are accessible. • They are challenged and taught well. • They are encouraged to study and do their best. • They enjoy being in the sixth form. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The printed course information, advice on what to study and careers guidance. • Teaching and assessment, particularly knowing about progress made. • The college's response to their views. |

Inspectors agree with the positive comments from students. A high number (262 students = 73 %) returned the questionnaire and the percentage of displeased students was high. This evidence conflicts with what inspectors observed during the inspection week. Inspectors spoke to a large number of students, formally and informally, observed students at work and at break time and investigated areas of concern. Students have chosen appropriate courses and the prospectus is clear. Many said that the induction programme was helpful in Year 11, but that they would like more guidance at the beginning of Year 12 and on future careers. However, students feel that they can go to their teachers to ask for further information. Teaching observed was good. Assessment is used to plan the next stage of learning, but students need to be given more specific steps on how to achieve predicted grades. Reports to parents are not sufficiently focused on progress made or on areas for improvement. The range of activities offered is satisfactory overall, but students need to be engaged more actively in decision-making and in the life of the college. The principal, assistant principal for post-16 and the senior team are aware of the concerns raised in the questionnaire and agree that they require further attention.

COMPARING PROVISION IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

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

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The college's results and achievements

Standards on entry into Year 10

- 1 In the previous inspection report, in 1997, the intake was judged to be above average in mathematics and science and below average in English, particularly for boys. The characteristics of the 2002 intake are similar, with overall attainment on entry into Year 10 above average. The proportion of students who have special educational needs is average.

Performance in examinations

- 2 General Certificate of Education (GCSE) results of Year 11 students in 2002 were in line with the national average for those obtaining five or more passes at grades A* to C. Results for students obtaining five or more passes at A*-G grades were above average. The average point score in GCSE results has remained constant and in line with the rising national average over the last three years.
- 3 When compared with similar schools (based on the proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals) results at age 16 are well below average at five or more A* to C grades and above average at five or more A*-G grades. Analysis of the 2002 GCSE results against results achieved in the 2000 National Curriculum tests, taken by the same students when in Year 9, show satisfactory achievement for students gaining five or more passes at A* to G grades, but unsatisfactory achievement in terms of grades A* to C. This is measured by comparing the performance of students at Bosworth Community College with those schools where students had a similar attainment profile in national test taken two years earlier.
- 4 The number of students not entered for any GCSE is low. The Leicester Vocational Framework and Entry Level Certificate provide appropriate accreditation routes, and students on these courses achieve creditable results and worthwhile qualifications.
- 5 In 2002, GCSE results were well above average in sociology, above average in media studies, English and information and communication technology. They were in line with the average in the majority of other subjects, but below average in art, business studies, design and technology, mathematics and modern foreign languages. Boys' results were low in art, design and technology and English.

Standards of students who are currently at the college

- 6 Standards at age 16 are above national expectation in business studies, information and communication technology, media studies, physical education and sociology. They are in line with those normally seen in all other subjects, except in mathematics and modern foreign languages. In religious education standards are poor because the Agreed Syllabus is not sufficiently covered in Years 10 and 11. Consequently students have a very superficial knowledge of religions and beliefs. Whilst drama was not inspected in depth, work seen was of a very high standard.

- 7 Achievements and progress are very good in media studies and sociology, good in business studies, English, information and communication technology, media studies and physical education. Progress is satisfactory in art, citizenship, design and technology, geography, history, humanities and music. The rate of progress is too slow in mathematics, religious education, science and modern foreign languages.

Performance of boys and girls

- 8 In recent years, girls have attained higher results than boys at GCSE. The gap has not closed and the difference is now wider than the national figure. Over the last three years boys' results, at the higher grades, have not improved sufficiently and the gender difference, at 15 per cent is now more marked than the 7 per cent difference in 1997. Boys' performance is noticeably lower than that of girls in art, business studies, design and technology, English, geography and modern foreign languages.

Progress of gifted and talented

- 9 Gifted and talented students make insufficient progress overall, particularly in geography, history, mathematics, modern foreign languages and science. Some subjects provide good opportunities to extend their learning, for example in business studies and media studies.
- 10 When appropriate activities are offered, high attaining students work very hard and are eager to learn. This leads to very good progress in acquiring deeper conceptual understanding and more advanced skills. Across subjects and in specific lessons, however, these opportunities are often lacking and are, at times, curtailed by the wide range of abilities in some teaching groups. The college has already identified this area as needing further development. From September 2003 a named co-ordinator at the college will be monitoring achievements of more and most able students, working with named co-ordinators in the local family of schools.

Achievement of students with special educational needs

- 11 The students on the special educational needs register achieve well. They make good progress and this is due to the effective levels of support they receive, both in withdrawal groups and in class. This is especially true in the development of their literacy skills. The development of students' numeracy skills is not as well targeted because there is no numeracy screening undertaken on entry. For a small number of students in Years 10 and 11 the college has made satisfactory provision for those who do not study a modern foreign language and opt for extra English and additional mathematics. This provision helps them make rapid progress in basic skills. Students with special educational needs are entered for both GCSE and Entry Level Certificate in an appropriate range of subjects. A substantial number of these students in the past have been successful in gaining passes in this alternative accreditation as well as in their GCSE examinations.

Standards of literacy

- 12 Standards of literacy skills are in line with those normally seen by the end of Year 11, and sufficiently adequate to support their work in subjects across the school. Across subjects there is evidence of the widespread use of technical and specialist vocabulary lists and the use of guidance, such as writing frames, to support students' extended writing. Reading for information is an area requiring further development. The Information Centre manager works hard to provide access to a range of suitable

resources to support the development of reading and information retrieval, but the general level of resourcing in the Information Centre is too limited to contribute strongly enough to the development of students' literacy skills. Examples of effective work to develop literacy were seen in English, science, history, information and communication technology and media studies, and in psychology, film studies, theatre studies and health and social care in the sixth form.

- 13 The college is making sound moves to develop literacy further across the curriculum. The literacy coordinator is enthusiastic and knowledgeable. Whole-staff training sessions in, for example, speaking and listening, and approaches to supporting the improvement of boys' attainment, have helped to raise awareness of literacy and its part in improving teaching and learning.

Standards of numeracy

- 14 Standards of numeracy are satisfactory. Number work is a key focus of mathematics teaching in Year 10, and exercise books show plentiful examples of accurate work. Teachers challenge and expect students to do basic calculations mentally, balancing this with effective use of calculators when necessary. Students are sometimes too ready to accept that the calculator answer is correct, without doing an approximate mental calculation to check that an answer is realistic. Mathematics lessons often begin with a short numeracy activity. At best this prepares students well for what is to follow. For example, a lesson on percentages was preceded by an excellent practice session on multiplying and dividing by 10 and 100. In other subjects there are good examples of students using their skills with number effectively. There is frequent use of data in graphs, tables and charts in psychology, sociology, geography and science. In physical education, students used multiplication and graphs confidently to record results of fitness tests. Although these examples show that numeracy is used well when relevant, number skills are not always reinforced sufficiently across the curriculum.

Performance targets

- 15 From 2002, the GCSE targets became more appropriately challenging. In 2002, the college met its targets, set within the range proposed by the LEA. For 2003 and 2004, targets are more challenging and demonstrate a commitment to improving results further. These targets are realistic.

Parents' comments

- 16 The great majority of parents who expressed an opinion at the meeting or in the questionnaire indicated that they believe their children make good progress at the college and that they are expected to work hard. Inspectors found that this is the case in the great majority of subjects. Progress is insufficient for gifted and talented students and in those subjects listed previously in paragraph 9.

Progress since the previous inspection

- 17 In the 1997 report the intake was judged to be similar to the current intake. Results have improved since 1997 in line with the national rate of improvement. Progress is satisfactory overall in Years 10 and 11, although not across all subjects and teaching groups. The gender difference continues to give cause for concern.

Sixth form

Performance in examinations

- 18 Validated statistical data for 2002 results is not currently available. National comparison is therefore made with 2001 results. Progress was judged to be good in the sixth form in 1997. This has been at least maintained and, in some subject areas, the rate of progress is now very good. Results in the examinations continue to be high.
- 19 In 2001, sixth-form results were well above average and boys' results were particularly high. Students were very successful and gained A to E grades in a wide range of subjects. Over the last three years, the average point score per student has been above the national figure. The overall good results were maintained in 2002, although some subjects were more successful than others. Results in the General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQ), at intermediate and advanced levels, have been consistently above average.
- 20 Students transfer from Year 11 into the sixth form to study AS courses if they achieve five or more A* to C grades at GCSE. Some students enter with relatively more modest achievements and are steered appropriately towards courses designed to meet their particular needs. They make at least good progress during Years 12 and 13. Students who enter the sixth form with above-average GCSE grades sustain these high levels and achieve well by the time they leave. There is no significant difference between the progress of boys and girls. Students with special educational needs make very good progress and perform well when results are compared with their prior levels of attainment.
- 21 The recent trend in A-level examination results has been well above average in information technology, physical education and psychology and above average in art, business studies, film studies, mathematics, sociology and theatre studies. Results in English and health and social care have been similar to those achieved nationally. Results in design and technology have been just below average. In some subjects, such as further maths, music and modern foreign languages, numbers are too small for a national comparison to be made.
- 22 Students' performances in individual subjects fluctuate year on year, and the number of entries varies across subjects from very low to very high. Over the last two years, AS results have followed a positive trend in art and design, biology, business studies, chemistry, design and technology, English language and literature, English literature, geography, history, mathematics, psychology, sociology and theatre studies. AS results dropped slightly in English language, film studies, French, ICT, music, physical education and physics. Results for Year 13 students at A-level improved in biology, chemistry, design and technology, French, geography, history, ICT, mathematics, music, physical education, physics, psychology, sociology and theatre studies. They dropped in art and design, business studies, English language, English literature and film studies.

Standards of students who are currently at the college

- 23 Current students achieve at least as well as expected at this stage of their courses in all subjects and do particularly well in psychology, theatre studies and film studies. Students on GNVQ courses attain appropriate standards and make good progress.

- 24 Students have generally well-developed key skills. They communicate clearly and confidently, both orally and in writing. They use their mathematical skills competently in subjects such as science, geography and business studies. Students use computers with confidence to word-process or search for information on the internet. In many subjects, they use the Internet to improve essays and coursework assignments. Students demonstrate that they can interpret the source material well and adapt it to the needs of their projects. On the few occasions when students' basic skills are limited, the college makes good arrangements to bring them up to standards.
- 25 The number of students continuing from Year 11 into the sixth form is just over half, and nearly all students stay for the full length of their courses. A high percentage of students (74% in 2002) continue on to further or higher education.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

Attitudes

- 26 Attitudes are good. Students are very positive about the college and what it has to offer them. They move around the college calmly and purposefully and get to lessons promptly. They are open, honest and friendly and very willing to talk about college life, their studies and other activities. In lessons, students focus on their work and are keen to engage in activities and discussions. Concentration is generally good and most students settle well to learning tasks. They respond well to enthusiastic teaching. In three quarters of all lessons observed, attitudes to learning were good or better, and very good in English, history, physical education and media studies. In a small number of lessons, mainly in mathematics, science and modern foreign languages, attitudes were unsatisfactory and this was due to poor or undemanding teaching, poor management of behaviour or lack of interest in the subject. A small minority of students have a poor work ethic, come to lessons without basic equipment and find it difficult to settle and concentrate, which can be disruptive to the learning of others.

Behaviour

- 27 Behaviour is good. The majority of parents are satisfied with the standards of behaviour. Lesson changeover is particularly good. The very large numbers of students, on the move through narrow corridors, were observed keeping to the left in an orderly manner. Students are sensible and courteous. Remarkably, visually impaired students move with complete safety at the same time. There are few incidents of oppressive behaviour and little bullying and this is substantiated in the annual student survey.
- 28 Behaviour in most lessons is good and the majority of students respond well to teachers' expectations. In English, film studies, media studies, physical education, sociology and theatre studies behaviour is very good and has a very positive impact on learning. Students are very clear about their rights and responsibilities as learners and know the rewards and sanctions policy well. Staff do not spend a disproportionate amount of time dealing with behaviour issues and learning is not often impeded. However, a minority of students, particularly in Year 10, can be immature and silly in lessons and around the college.

- 29 Exclusions have risen. There have been two permanent exclusions this year with none last year. The fixed term exclusions have doubled to over sixty so far this year. However exclusion is used appropriately, particularly to deal with recent unacceptable incidents of violence at lunch time.
- 30 The behaviour of students with special educational needs, in one-to-one sessions and when working in small groups, is good. They relate well to teachers and to the learning support assistants (LSAs); they work enthusiastically and are encouraged by their good progress. Students with emotional and behavioural difficulties are well managed by staff and actively helped to overcome their problems. For example, there is an excellent programme in place to reintroduce back into mainstream school students with emotional and behavioural difficulties who have missed a significant amount of schooling. This programme is funded by the Local Education Authority.

Personal development

- 31 Personal development is good. Many students are very good at taking responsibility for their learning. They cope very confidently with the pressures of college life and respond very willingly to opportunities to get involved in other activities, for example, performances, charity fundraising, trips and visits. In English and geography, high levels of mutual respect have a very positive impact on learning and personal development. Relationships are very good and have an excellent, positive impact on the ethos of the college. Students mix extremely well and work very effectively in pairs and groups, especially in practical lessons, for example in design and technology. The impact of having young children on site attending nursery, as well as visually impaired students and adults with learning difficulties, undoubtedly has a very positive impact on students' developing maturity and tolerance levels. This is evident in the way students work and socialize out of lesson time. Relationships throughout the college are very positive, including the rapport between students and all adults working in the college.
- 32 The special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) and her team of learning support assistants provide well-targeted support. Individual educational plans (IEPs) are in place for all students on the special educational needs register. These are concise, with clear and manageable targets, and are made available to all staff. This ensures that all teachers have very good information about the specific needs of their students. Students know their learning and behaviour targets and can reflect on the progress they feel they are making towards meeting these. Personal relationships are generally good between students and between students and the adults supporting them.

Attendance

- 33 Attendance is satisfactory and has improved since the last inspection. Last year it was above the national average: indications so far this year suggest it will be similar. However, unauthorised absence is well above the national average. Last year it was 3.4 per cent against the national average of 1.2 per cent. This is due, in part, to term-time holidays and some truancy. A minority of students have poor attendance records which impact significantly on their learning. The college works hard, with the welfare education officer, to reduce the level of unauthorised absence.

Sixth form

- 34 Attitudes are good. Two thirds of students stated in the survey that they enjoy being in the college and would recommend it to others. In English, film studies and psychology, attitudes to the subject are excellent. In lessons, attitudes are very good and in nearly 70 per cent of those observed they were very good or better. Students are committed to their learning and want to do well. They have realistic goals, are mature, confident, friendly, well adjusted and very willing to discuss their work and aspects of college life.
- 35 Students willingly engage in the life of the college when opportunities are provided, for example, through the formal and informal peer mentoring schemes, youth work, performances and charity fundraising. However, these activities involve only a small proportion. Most students state that these opportunities are very limited, and half of the students do not feel that the college listens and responds to their views.
- 36 Personal development and relationships are very good. Students work together very effectively and are supportive of one another. Most students have good study skills and make effective use of private study time. Most persevere and are well motivated, taking good responsibility for their own learning. Relationships between adults and peers are a real strength in teaching and tutor groups and have a significant impact on learning. Post-16 students provide very good role models to younger students.
- 37 Attendance is good. The majority of students attend college and lessons regularly and punctually.

HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?

- 38 Teaching is satisfactory in Years 10 and 11 and is good in the sixth form, where in 97 per cent of lessons observed, it was satisfactory or better and in two thirds it was good or better. In Years 10 and 11, teaching in 92 per cent of lessons observed was satisfactory or better, and in nearly two thirds it was good or better. The proportion of good teaching, at 62 per cent, is slightly below the most recently reported national average of 70 per cent. The teaching of sixth-form students is effective, resulting in students making rapid progress.

Good and sound teaching and learning in Years 10 and 11

- 39 Teaching in Years 10 and 11 is sound, with about one lesson in five of very high quality. Teaching is very good in drama, media studies and sociology. It is at least sound in all subjects except mathematics and modern foreign languages where there are shortcomings.
- 40 Teachers' subject knowledge is used well to help learning. Planning is very effective, for example in history and physical education where schemes of work are well developed and lessons cater well for the needs of learners. The expectations teachers have of students' work are sound and consistently high in drama, physical education and information and communication technology. For example, in a Year 10 GCSE PE lesson, students were able to measure their resting heart rate and use this as a base line to measure changes as a result of taking part in a 'step test' designed to increase it. Management of pupils is almost always good. In a Year 10 science lesson investigating osmosis in potato chips, students made good progress because of a series of well-planned activities and the effective work of support staff. The use of time, support staff and resources is good in all year groups. The quality of marking

and the use made of assessment information by teachers is satisfactory, overall. Oral feedback, praise and advice are frequently evident, and students respond well to this type of encouragement. In the most effective practice teachers use assessment to inform students of their progress and explain how they could do even better. Good examples were observed in design and technology and history. The use of homework to improve learning is sound overall.

- 41 In just over nine lessons in every ten observed, the quality of teaching was satisfactory or better, and in one lesson in every five it was very good or better. As a result, learning is sound. Students make good efforts to improve their work. For example, in a Year 10 media studies lesson, students were enthusiastic about the subject and the range of activities provided in the lesson. This meant that they considered carefully the use of branding in the media, and their very positive motivation led to very good progress. Concentration and independence are generally good in all year groups. For example, in a Year 11 history lesson on the history of medicine, students concentrated very well when looking at the topic of 'vaccination' and remained focused on the lesson as a result of the good pace of learning expected by the teacher, the positive response students got about comments they made and the change of activities during the lesson. Students in Years 10 and 11 have a sound understanding of how their work is progressing and of how well they apply themselves to their work.

Unsatisfactory teaching

- 42 In approximately one lesson in every twelve the quality of teaching is less than satisfactory. There are particular shortcomings in mathematics and modern foreign languages. There are a few occasions where classroom management is unsatisfactory. For example in a Year 10 French lesson, students who lacked concentration were not managed effectively and the pace of learning slowed to an unsatisfactory level. Similarly, in a Year 10 mathematics lesson, noisy behaviour and lack of concentration meant that insufficient learning took place, despite the presence of an additional member of staff in a support role.
- 43 The use of marking to improve the rate of progress is not sufficiently effective in GCSE mathematics, science and modern foreign languages. For example, in GCSE mathematics there is too much indiscriminate use of ticks. Homework requires improvement in GCSE science and mathematics. Further development of planning is needed in music where Year 11 GCSE students have not covered fully their coursework because planning does not ensure that they complete activities in a sufficiently organised way.

Teaching of literacy and numeracy

- 44 Teaching of literacy skills is done well and is satisfactory overall. The work is co-ordinated effectively and the policy applied consistently across subjects. Many teachers use good strategies and resources such as "word walls" that set out technical vocabulary and "writing frames" which provide a structure for students who need help in organising their written work. Good examples were seen in law, where technical terminology was used purposefully to discuss jury service and in drama, where specific vocabulary dealing with drama conventions is taught effectively and therefore used by students appropriately. Teaching of numeracy skills is sound overall. There are examples, in a range of subjects, of well-taught activities which provide for accurate use of number. However, practice is currently too sporadic and some subjects do not reinforce this basic skill enough. The college has started to

consider its policy on numeracy skills, but the impact is yet to materialise across all areas of the curriculum.

Teaching of students with special educational needs

- 45 Teaching is good. The special educational needs co-ordinator, her teaching colleagues and the team of learning support assistants work hard to ensure that the individual needs of all students with statements of special educational need are catered for. Students with specific disabilities, for example visual impairment, cystic fibrosis, autism and cerebral palsy are very well supported. This includes appropriate support by the college staff, staff in the unit for visually impaired students and other external support agencies. When students are withdrawn for specific support, teaching and coaching is done well, being both sensitive and appropriately demanding. For example, good learning was observed in the Information Centre where two students working on a history project were given specific resources and well-targeted, one-to-one support. They said they appreciated the help which moved their understanding forward. In mainstream lessons, teachers are aware of students who have individual educational plans and, where teaching is good, these are used to plan relevant activities and inform both the students and learning support assistants of strengths and areas to improve.

Teaching of gifted and talented students

- 46 The college has started to develop a policy for gifted and talented students in partnership with its family of schools, through a project called “more and most able students”. The implementation of the policy in practice is at a very early stage. Senior managers agree that this aspect of teaching and learning requires further improvement. Currently, gifted students do not make sufficient progress in relation to their potential and level of prior learning. Although the college has started to reflect on this specific group of students, the action plan to meet needs, and the specific strategies to raise students’ aspirations and the standards of teaching have had insufficient impact across subjects.

Sixth Form

- 47 Teaching is good. One third of lessons observed were of very high quality and in these lessons students made faster-than-average progress. Teaching is very good in the sixth form in film studies, information and communication technology, psychology, sociology and theatre studies.
- 48 Teachers’ subject knowledge is a strength in the sixth form. This helps students to make good progress. For example, in a Year 13 biology lesson, the teacher’s high level of knowledge about genetic engineering meant that questions posed to the class were sufficiently probing to help them improve their understanding. Lessons often have clear objectives and are well focused. For example, in a Year 13 theatre studies lesson on ‘A Streetcar Named Desire’, the lesson started very well because of the accurate reference to examination requirements. This enabled students to be clear about what they needed to learn. In health and social care, good feedback is given on targets set for students and how well they are achieving them. In a year 13 information and communication technology lesson, students understood the necessary features required to write an effective ‘user guide’ because the teacher consistently expected them to work to a high level. These positive features of high expectations, effective teaching methods, good use of assessment and well planned homework are evident across nearly all subjects.

- 49 Learning is good in the sixth form. Sixth form students have a good understanding of how well they are doing and are aware of their targets. For example, in a Year 13 mathematics lesson on volumes, students had a very clear understanding of the grades they were aspiring to and knew some of the ways that they could improve their work. In psychology, students meet unfamiliar situations with objectivity and have a strong commitment to work through complex ideas and achieve a good level of understanding. Students become skilled at evaluating the strengths and limitations of different methods and models of enquiry. In a Year 12 film studies lesson, students dealt sensitively with the issues raised by the film 'Let him have it' and analyse some of the ways that the film maker achieved the desired effect in the opening sequence.

Progress since the previous inspection

- 50 The improvement in the teaching and learning of students in Years 10 and 11 since 1997 has been good. At that time one in five lessons for this age group was unsatisfactory and 80 per cent of lessons were satisfactory or better. The strengths of the teaching reported for the sixth form have been at least maintained.
- 51 The college has made good progress in trying to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Clear expectations for teaching are published for all staff and they are used for a systematic programme of monitoring. The results of these observations are collated into a regular report on teaching and learning within the college and reported to the governors' curriculum committee. This has led to improvements in specific lessons and subjects. The current criteria used to review teaching are not sufficiently rigorous to provide essential aspects of improvement that are needed. For example, there is insufficient focus on attainment, achievement and whether students are learning as much as they should. The programme now needs to focus not only on shortcomings in unsatisfactory lessons but also on increasing the proportion of good, very good and excellent lessons in all year groups.
- 52 Improving expectations in the teaching and learning of Years 10 and 11 is a key priority since able students, particularly boys, make less-than-average progress in the GCSE years leading to lower-than-expected results at A*-C grades. An Advanced Skills teacher has been given the specific role of targeting the relative underachievement of boys in examinations. Work has begun on raising staff and student awareness of the issue and on developing some ways of improving the achievement of boys, for example through research into single-gender teaching groups in science. It is too early to evaluate the impact of this work but the general direction and management of the initiative appear to be good.

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

- 53 The quality and range of learning opportunities provided for students is satisfactory. The curriculum is broad and relevant to needs. Students can start the study of new subjects such as business studies, law, media studies and sociology. In many respects, the college achieves its aim to provide a comprehensive curriculum and to offer choice for the individual.

Provision in Years 10 and 11

- 54 The college provides a broad range of subjects at GCSE. Non-GCSE accredited courses are being introduced gradually, but the range is not yet developed fully. Current provision includes GNVQ engineering (taught in partnership with the local college), additional physical education, junior sports leader, life skills, better learning and parent craft. Provision for religious education is inadequate and as it was at the time of the previous inspection. It is intended to be taught through subjects across the curriculum but is not sufficiently planned and assessed to ensure adequate coverage. Statutory requirements are not met.
- 55 A few students do not study a modern foreign language. This is appropriate as it enables them to concentrate on learning basic literacy and numeracy skills. A small proportion of students with low literacy skills or who are reluctant to learn receive an appropriate alternative curriculum which includes a weekly experience at a college of further education, opportunities offered through the Youth Centre such as youth achievement awards and development in personal and social health. The course is accredited as part of the Leicestershire Vocational Framework (LVF). The college is aware that further work is needed to ensure that it meets students' needs fully and involves the Youth Team more. The quality of the curriculum is at least satisfactory in all subjects, although progress in mathematics is restricted by the shortage of time. Curricular provision is good in design and technology, English, geography, modern foreign languages and physical education, and very good in media studies, film studies and sociology.

Planning to develop literacy and numeracy skills

- 56 Planning to improve literacy skills across the curriculum is good. A working group of volunteers is in place to identify key areas for development. Not all departments are represented and more remains to be done to engage all subject leaders directly in this initiative, and to learn from the emerging good practice in the college. However, across subjects much good practice was seen in planning to improve provision for this skill. Plans to develop numeracy skills have started and now need greater focus across all subjects. Curricular links with the high schools to transfer the good practice of the National Key Stage 3 Strategy need further development.

Extra-curricular provision

- 57 Provision for extra-curricular activities is satisfactory. The college works hard to overcome the limitations for students who live a considerable distance away from the college, and a late bus is put on, but only on Monday afternoons. Therefore most activities take place on Monday afternoons and in the short lunch break. The main strengths are drama productions and music; for example, inspectors observed an excellent lunchtime concert during the inspection week. The college also achieves considerable success in sports. Drop-in sessions for homework are available and Year 11 students receive additional revision sessions. The Youth Centre is open at lunch time and four evenings a week and has recently launched a cyber café. This dovetails well with the good counselling service provided. The college provides many opportunities to enrich the curriculum, for example through study visits to theatres, field trips and residential visits. These have included a recent skiing trip to Canada for visually impaired students and a Team Challenge Expedition to Namibia for Year 10 and 11 students.

Careers education and guidance

- 58 Provision for careers guidance and vocational education is good. The careers library in the Information Centre, although small, provides up-to-date information and students have useful careers interviews and advice. The Connexions service is in transition at present and has yet to make a valuable contribution to guiding students. The community takes an active part in supporting the college, for example through thriving business links, although the college is in a relatively small village compared with its large size. The college contributes well to the community, for example through a crèche, a nursery, public use of the sports facilities, an IT group for older people and day and evening sessions for adults with learning difficulties. Students help to raise money for charity. The concept of lifelong learning is seen as important by the college and plans are in hand to improve the continuity of community provision. The Youth Team makes a significant contribution to students' educational and personal development.

Personal, social and health education (PSHE)

- 59 Provision for personal, social and health education is strong. Students enjoy their lessons and find them useful. The curriculum for these areas has recently changed with the introduction of a relevant citizenship module. The accreditation of PSHE through the Leicestershire Vocational Framework provides students with the opportunity to gain an additional GCSE qualification. Modules cover personal health, careers education, work-related aspects of citizenship and work experience. A good range of issues is tackled including sex and relationships education and bullying. Contributions by well-chosen visitors are valuable and deal with sensitive issues as on the Health Fair Day when a range of appropriate workshops were offered in emotional, sexual, physical and social health contexts. Teaching of PSHE is sound overall, with some lessons of high quality, with good use of resources, as observed in a Year 11 lesson where students used a selection of newspaper cuttings well to reflect on discrimination at work. Some PSHE lessons, however, and the daily registration time, do not always have the impact that they should because of shortcomings in the teaching and poor use of available time. Whilst the daily fifteen minute registration time is short, too much time is wasted on administrative matters.
- 60 The co-ordinator manages the programme very well and, as a result, PSHE makes a positive contribution to students' personal development. Sharing the good teaching and improving the use of registration time are aspects to develop further.

Curricular links with educational partners

- 61 Good systems are in place for partnership working with the main contributory high schools. Some departments make very effective use of these links, for example with bridging projects and good planning to build on previous work in geography. However, liaison is ineffective in some departments and does not ensure good progression and continuity. For example, in science there is sometimes too much re-teaching of work done in previous years at the expense of developing deeper understandings. Awareness of the National Key Stage 3 Strategy and the resulting impact for students in Years 10 and 11 are limited. The three-day induction programme ensures smooth transition to the college, and key staff make regular visits to the partner schools. Liaison with colleges of further education enables those students who choose a vocational route in Years 10 and 11 to gain considerable benefit from working on work-related courses. Planning for this partnership is good.

Provision for gifted and talented students

- 62 The college's recent policy has only been put into practice effectively by a small number of departments, such as English and media studies, where there are considerable opportunities for creativity and independent learning. The college is planning to improve provision through its project with the family of contributory schools. Planning and consistent contribution from all faculties is an area for further improvement.

Sixth form

- 63 The quality and range of learning opportunities provided for sixth-form students is good. The college provides a good choice of well-planned AS and A2 courses, including subjects not offered at GCSE, such as film studies and theatre studies. The college understands the concerns about lack of provision for Spanish in the sixth form, but take-up has been either non-existent or very low and, consequently, governors felt that they could not justify the cost of providing for the teaching of this language at the college. Provision for modern foreign languages is under review in an attempt to best meet students' needs.
- 64 Students follow a broad programme of studies. Seventy-five per cent of Year 12 students complete four or more courses and thirty-five per cent continue four or more in Year 13, above what is usually seen. Most Year 13 students take general studies and all Year 12 students take Key Skills courses in information technology (IT) and in communication if they are not specialising in these areas. There is a good choice of intermediate level vocational subjects such as art and design, health and social care, IT and leisure and tourism and a sports leader award course. However, there is a limited choice of advanced level vocational provision. The college is aware of the need to develop a wider range of courses and has plans to improve provision.
- 65 The college makes very good efforts to make courses accessible to all students, whatever their interests or needs. Transport is put on to give one-year students access to good courses at a nearby college for half the week. However, provision for them for the rest of the time is unsatisfactory because there are not enough activities planned for them and they do not receive enough support when they are not in lessons. The college is aware of this issue and developments are in hand.
- 66 Provision for students with special educational needs is very good. It is particularly impressive for the two visually impaired students who are very well integrated into the college.
- 67 Provision for religious education is still limited, although some aspects are taught through the general studies programme. The programme of personal, social and health education is well planned. However, students' personal development and welfare is not enhanced sufficiently by providing opportunities for students to take an active role in the life of the college or local community.
- 68 A surprisingly high number of negative views were expressed in the student questionnaire, given the good success rate. This suggests that students would appreciate more consultation. However, students spoken to during the inspection were largely positive about curricular provision at the college.

Progress since the previous inspection

- 69 Progress since the previous inspection has been satisfactory overall. The college has developed well its AS and A2 courses and enrichment programme. Not enough has been done for the one-year students and in offering advanced level vocational opportunities. In Years 10 and 11, many subjects are planned to meet needs. Extra-curricular opportunities are now appropriate. Students still have a fragmented and overall poor provision for religious education.

PROVISION MADE FOR STUDENTS' SPIRITUAL, MORAL, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

- 70 Provision for students' spiritual development is poor. The absence of provision for religious education means that students' knowledge of Christianity and other faiths is very poor. The college has carried out an audit of the spiritual dimension of the curriculum, and a working party has produced a booklet for staff to support their teaching. Despite references to this dimension in GCSE syllabuses, it is omitted from schemes of work in mathematics, science, English and music and no evidence was observed in lessons during the inspection week. A number of appropriate opportunities to explore aspects of spirituality were missed. The college provides opportunities to pray and fast during Ramadan. There is no daily act of worship, though some assemblies provide opportunity for individual reflection, leading to self-awareness and respect for others. Some individual projects in art do promote self-reflection, especially in the sixth form. In drama and media studies, good opportunities for spiritual development were observed, such as in the teaching of Derek Bentley's, 'Let him Have It'.
- 71 Provision for moral development is good. Teachers set a good example and expect students to behave considerately. The college has a clear system of rewards and sanctions and actively seeks to develop honesty and fairness. Students are aware of the difference between right and wrong and are taught the relationship between behaviour and consequence. Moral issues are considered in a number of subjects, for instance science, when the morality of intensive chicken rearing was discussed, or sixth form psychology, when students explored ethical questions relating to research. In physical education, positive standards of sportsmanship and sporting behaviour are encouraged and insisted upon. Students' awareness of the needs of the less fortunate is developed effectively through charitable fund-raising events.
- 72 Provision for social development is good. Self-discipline is the basis on which the behaviour code is built. Students are encouraged to take responsibility for their own actions, and those of others, through a number of initiatives, notably through positive staff and student relationships. Further opportunities for social development are provided in a number of subjects. For example, in English, geography and physical education, students are given good opportunities to work in groups and take responsibility, chairing discussions and reporting back to whole groups of students. In English, students have the opportunity to study the social conditions and attitudes to teaching at different times in history. An effective mentoring scheme has been developed to secure high quality relationships and improve academic outcomes. Where schemes of work are less well developed, for example in mathematics, opportunities for developing students' social skills are missed.
- 73 Provision for cultural development is unsatisfactory. Students learn about their own European culture through satisfactory programmes in music and art and good opportunities in media studies and English. There are satisfactory numbers of study visits and exchanges to mainland Europe and an appropriate range of extra curricular

activities including musical performances and sporting activities, which involve a number of students. The preparation of students for the multi-cultural society of today requires some attention and there are some important shortcomings in students' cultural awareness. Some progress has been made in subjects like English. For example in a Year 11 lesson, the Pakistani culture was explored through a unit called 'Poems from other cultures', and in media studies a Hindi film was used to stimulate discussion about different cultural values. However, in most subjects little progress has been made or actions monitored to develop provision for cultural diversity, identified as a key issue in the 1997 inspection. The lack of religious education weakens provision further as there is little teaching of cultural differences or significant evidence of celebrating and raising awareness of the rich diversity that exists in the locality and the wider world.

HOW WELL DOES THE COLLEGE CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?

- 74 The college continues to be very successful in promoting the health, safety and general wellbeing of students. Improvements in the management and monitoring of health and safety have been effective; planned building improvements will further raise standards. Arrangements for child protection and "Looked After" students are appropriate and staff are well informed.

Promoting and monitoring personal development

- 75 Very good pastoral liaison with the high schools and thorough induction arrangements ensure that staff, especially tutors and heads of year, have a very thorough knowledge of the individual needs of students. Despite being a very large college, students are well known by staff. However, there are inconsistencies and discontinuity across form groups and a wide variation in the effective use of daily registration time ranging from good to unsatisfactory. Personal development is very effectively monitored, and individual needs are well supported by experienced staff, including a counsellor and learning mentors as well as ready access to the excellent range of youth service workers based in the college. A comprehensive PHSE programme provides good guidance and is matched well to the needs of this age group. It is effectively delivered by form tutors. The well-planned programmes of work experience for Year 10 students also promotes good personal development.

Promoting and monitoring good behaviour and attendance

- 76 Attendance is thoroughly monitored and the introduction of electronic registration and a first day response system has improved the reliability and effectiveness of data since the previous inspection. Good attendance is effectively rewarded and good partnership with the Education Welfare Officer ensures that students with poor attendance are identified and appropriately supported and often successfully reintegrated. The daily use of the electronic registration includes some inaccuracies which slow down arrangements to follow up all absences quickly.
- 77 A very good behaviour management system is consistently applied by all staff and clearly understood by students. Rewards and sanctions are effective and staff continue to modify the system to motivate students. The success triangle is clearly displayed. Detention, internal isolation and exclusion are appropriately used. Exclusion is always carefully considered and letters to parents are of high quality. Governors are appropriately involved and have amended some decisions. Reintegration is properly planned and negotiated. Policies, notice boards and PSHE lessons clearly emphasise the college's intolerance of oppressive behaviour. The

small number of incidents are dealt with quickly, logged and reported to governors. Students complete an annual survey which enables staff to monitor the effectiveness of its policies and a staff survey of working conditions has also provided further monitoring evidence.

Promoting and monitoring students' academic progress

- 78 Monitoring of students' academic progress is good. College policies provide informative guidelines to faculties, and procedures in departments are effective. The systems to record information on students as they enter the college in Year 10 are managed well. Assessment data are of high quality and are used effectively by the senior team to track progress and identify underachievement. The college makes good use of local data to analyse the progress students make from the time they enter the college to the time they leave. This includes analysis of progress by gender, ability and teaching groups. Consequently, the senior team is well informed about successes and underachievement. In several subjects, however, the data generated by the senior team are not yet used consistently well to raise standards. A good example is found in science where data are used effectively to improve students' work in investigation.
- 79 Students receive frequent information on whether or not they are likely to achieve the target set for their grades at GCSE. In Year 10, students know their predicted grades. However, in some subjects, they are not sufficiently clear about the steps they should take to reach the potential grade or a higher level. The targets are accurate and students are informed of their progress at several intervals during the year, but there are insufficient opportunities to discuss targets in depth and to identify, with precision, what the student should do to improve. This is particularly the case for gifted students who aim for the highest standards. Many teachers identify strengths and weaknesses in students' work accurately and modify their teaching programme accordingly. However, for gifted and talented students, the use of assessment information is too limited, and insufficient challenge is offered in the planning of lessons. The outcomes of assessment are not yet sufficiently used to revise the key objectives for students and refine their learning targets, particularly in geography, mathematics and modern foreign languages. There are examples of good practice in design and technology where assessment is used well to improve coursework, and in drama and physical education where students' self-assessment enables them to improve their proficiency and skills.

Assessment of students with special educational needs

- 80 The college's assessment procedures for students with special educational needs are very good. There are good systems for identifying and assessing students which build upon the good liaison between the college and its contributory high schools. After students transfer, further diagnostic tests are undertaken and results are used to review individual education plans, set future targets and identify any further support required, including examination concessions.
- 81 Students on the special educational needs register have detailed individual educational plans (IEPs) which are reviewed regularly by all staff, with learning support assistants (LSAs) involved well in this review process. The Annual Review procedures comply fully with the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice requirements, both in the timing of reviews and the reporting on progress towards targets. Targets are invariably specific in their success criteria so students' progress

can be tracked accurately. All staff are provided with good information on students' targets, and in many subject areas these are used well to inform lesson planning.

Progress since the previous inspection

- 82 Standards for care and personal development have been maintained to high levels. Procedures for promoting attendance are now good. Aspects of assessment identified as needing improvement in the 1997 inspection report have been remedied. Procedures for monitoring attainment and progress are now good. Targets are set to raise standards and managers take responsibility for achievements and quality in their areas. This is no longer a key issue for action. Further refinements are needed in the setting of learning targets, particularly for boys and students capable of obtaining the highest grades at GCSE.

Sixth form

Advice, support and guidance

- 83 This is satisfactory overall. Responses to the student survey suggest that students are satisfied with the written course information they are given and the majority feel that their choice of courses suits their talents. Students report that they receive a useful individual interview in Year 11, later supplemented by good additional advice opportunities once GCSE results have been received. Students are satisfied with this preparation done in Year 11. However, students report that transfer arrangements do not include an induction programme at the beginning of Year 12. The tutorial programme provides good opportunities for personal and academic support, but students would prefer a set time for this as current arrangements can disrupt continuity of subject lessons. Most students would welcome improvements to private study facilities. Good support is provided for the UCAS process and the college arranges a comprehensive annual careers convention for all students, but in the student survey, many said that they would welcome better advice and careers guidance.
- 84 Form tutors provide an effective overview of all aspects of student development. They know the students well and are available to encourage and support them if required. The sixth-form council provides students with a voice, but half of the students in the survey do not feel that the college responds sufficiently to their views and too many students do not feel that they are able to bring about improvements. Their real engagement in the life of the sixth form and in decision-making requires further development. Students' welfare, health and safety are well secured at the college. The management of behaviour and attendance are of high order.

Assessment

- 85 Procedures for assessing attainment and progress are thorough. Teachers have good knowledge of the examinations' criteria used to assess work at AS and A Level. Coursework is marked accurately and students benefit from regular monitoring feedback and support in lessons. The college has comprehensive information on students' prior achievements. Students set clear targets and their progress is carefully tracked to make sure they are on course to achieve their potential. However, not all students are sufficiently clear about the grade they might expect to get and, more importantly, about the specific steps they might take to improve their work and get higher outcomes. This is because subject staff and form tutors have limited opportunities for individual tutoring. During the inspection week, many students

confirmed that teachers are accessible and willing to help when difficulties arise. However, the college is aware of the need to increase the quality of individual coaching further.

HOW WELL DOES THE COLLEGE WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

Parents' views of the college and their involvement

- 86 Parents are generally positive and supportive of this popular, oversubscribed college. Attendance at consultations and information evenings is good. Staff work hard to involve parents when there are concerns and also inform parents when students do well.
- 87 The college has a good reputation in the local community and is used well by many groups through the community education programme and youth service. However, there is little formal parental involvement in the college. Few parents attended the pre-inspection meeting and only 14 per cent returned the inspection questionnaire.
- 88 Considering the age range of students, parents' involvement is satisfactory overall. The involvement of parents of students with special educational needs is good. Information about their child's progress is provided regularly and parents are encouraged to attend review meetings and actively support their children's learning. The co-ordinator is readily available for parents who wish to discuss any issues with her.

The quality of information provided

- 89 Parents receive good written information, particularly the prospectus and the options information provided to students in the high schools, which is well supplemented by a parents' meeting. Reports are informative and the revised version issued this year provides more detail about attainment and progress as well as helpful targets for improvement and success. However, teachers' comments are still too heavily biased towards attitudes and effort rather than attainment and progress. Reports do not include progress in information and communication technology for students who study ICT across subjects in Years 10 and 11, and there is no religious education report. The interim monitoring reports issued to all year groups provide regular progress updates. Supplementary information is included in the students' planner, with helpful targets, but previous gradings are not provided so progress is not immediately clear to parents, and the use of the planner is far from consistent across form groups. A review of the timing of the annual consultation evenings for Years 10 and 11, with increased access to a wider range of staff, would be welcomed by many parents.

HOW WELL IS THE COLLEGE LED AND MANAGED?

- 90 Since the previous inspection a new principal and a new chair of governors have been appointed. Responsibilities in the senior team have been revised. Some middle managers have only been in post for a short while and the impact of their work is only just beginning to materialise.

Leadership

- 91 Leadership is good. The principal has continued to develop the vision of high expectations for the college where the aims and values reflect an ethos which delivers self-reliant, tolerant and confident lifelong learners. She has continued to raise standards of teaching and learning, demanding a high-performing team. Progress has been slower than expected in a few areas where staffing has changed, or actions have not been pursued with sufficient energy due to some resistance to the desired pace of change demanded by the principal. Senior staff have clearly defined roles and responsibilities with established links to departments. They provide good leadership for faculties.
- 92 The principal sets a positive example of commitment, energy and responsibility. She is determined to improve the learning environment and has initiated building developments which are ongoing. Mathematics and science will benefit considerably from the current programme. The successful bid for Sports College status was of high quality and will bring improved facilities and opportunities to the college and the wider community. The principles and values of the college are communicated very effectively by senior management. The impact is clear in the way that policies are used to promote students' personal development and support their welfare. The strong emphasis on adult education and youth service provision and the integral way it operates is further evidence of the commitment to provide equally for all members of the college's own and broader community.
- 93 Leadership of middle managers offers a mixed picture. The evaluation of strengths and the identification of areas for improvement are clear. The culture of accountability is strong. However, the actions taken to remedy weaker aspects are not yet effective in all areas. This is, in part, due to the fact that some heads of subjects are new to their post. For a few heads of subject expectations of standards of teaching and learning are too low, but generally, across the college, there is a shared commitment to improvement and good capacity to succeed. Heads of year are effective and have a good overview of students' pastoral and academic needs. Opportunities to monitor and improve the effectiveness of form tutors are insufficient.
- 94 A strength of the college is the development of an energetic, committed, qualified, empowered team of non-teaching staff working to provide high quality administrative and technical support services which enable teaching staff to focus on teaching. They make a significant impact on the quality of learning, for example in drama, media studies, film studies, special educational needs and individual studies in the Information Centre.

Management

- 95 Management of the college is good. Documentation is of high quality and all aspects of college work are systematically evaluated. Detailed monitoring provides the senior management team and governors with accurate information for thorough review. Staff are aware of policies, and day-to-day communication is good. Strategic thinking and planning are good. The five-year management plan sets out clear priorities and the whole college annual action plans, team maintenance and team development plans are detailed and specific. Actions needed to meet the college's targets and address agreed priorities are clearly stated.

- 96 Priorities for overall college development are appropriate and have focused on three main relevant issues for the last four years. These are mostly reflected in subject development plans, and raising attainment is given a very clear focus in English, design and technology and physical education. However, the college has been slow to develop a policy for gifted and talented students; no pastoral team plan is yet in place; and some of the departmental plans are not sufficiently focused on improving expectations in teaching and learning, for example in science, mathematics and modern foreign languages.
- 97 The vice-principals and assistant principals manage day-to-day issues with students and staff well. The college has an effective strategy for appraisal and performance management for both teaching and support staff. It has Investors in People status and will seek reaccreditation later this year. Senior staff are committed to staff development and provide good opportunities for research and development, for example through the deployment of Advanced Skills teachers and initiatives developed through working groups. The effectiveness of the current approach to classroom observations in raising teaching standards is, as yet, limited.
- 98 A carefully planned programme of professional development is well managed and staff benefit from the input of high quality speakers. The college provides good overall induction for new staff and carefully monitors and supports newly qualified teachers, but new teachers are not always supported enough within departments. For example, in science, temporary teachers still require a lot of guidance to understand the curriculum and meet the needs of students.
- 99 The leadership and management of the special educational needs (SEN) provision in the college are very good. The SEN co-ordinator is a very experienced teacher who deploys her staff effectively and efficiently to meet the needs of students on the register. She provides good advice and guidance to all colleagues and good opportunities for them to understand the process of special educational needs support in the college. Documentation and students' records are in good order and the SEN administrator provides a very good service to the co-ordinator and her staff by taking away some of the routine administrative tasks and enabling staff to concentrate on supporting students in the classroom. Funding for students with special educational needs is used appropriately and effectively. It is enhanced by further funding from other college budgets. Learning support assistants, support teachers and the SEN co-ordinator have good professional development opportunities to enhance their skills and knowledge. There is good liaison with the college's partner community college and contributory high schools, with a very thorough induction programme specifically designed for students with special educational needs prior to their transfer to the college.

Governing Body

- 100 The contribution of governors in shaping the direction of the college is good. They have a broad range of experience and expertise and an effective committee structure. Importantly they have some very effective links with local business and the community. They are very well informed through comprehensive termly reports by the principal, visits to the college and a range of presentations and reports by key staff. They hold the college to account, set challenging targets and have a clear idea of strengths and weaknesses. Governors interviewed during the inspection demonstrated a good understanding of the working of the college and a clear view of the priorities for development set against a limited budget.

- 101 Governors fulfill most of their statutory duties, except for religious education, a daily act of collective worship, the delivery of the programmes of study for ICT and reporting progress to parents on progress made in ICT.

Financial management, deployment of resources and staffing

Financial management

- 102 The college makes good strategic use of its resources. The income per student is below average, but the college is active and successful in raising money from outside sources to fund important improvements. These include new, certificated courses for low attainers, and a locally accredited personal, health and social education course. Other priorities are on hold, awaiting funding opportunities. There is a small budget deficit of about one per cent of income brought forward from previous years. Projections for the current year indicate this will be mostly recovered. The principles of achieving best value in using resources are met well because the college continually challenges its own performance and procedures, and consults students and parents about the quality of its work. It compares itself with other local schools, but could do more to compare itself with national performance indicators.

Staffing

- 103 The number, qualifications and experience of teachers match the demands of the curriculum well. Almost all teachers are specialists in their subject and their depth of knowledge has a positive effect on students' progress. Currently, however, there is no suitably qualified or experienced teacher to teach religious education, and temporary teachers are covering shortages in science. Some teachers from overseas have limited knowledge of the English National Curriculum. A broad network of support and administrative staff has been established throughout the college, working under the good leadership of the business and office managers. Individual roles and responsibilities have been reassessed in relation to curricular needs and this has been an effective strategy, enabling support staff to play a key role in supporting teaching and learning within each faculty.
- 104 In a small number of lessons observed two teachers were working within the same class. In the majority of these lessons this approach was not very effective because the benefits of having an extra member of staff did not always outweigh the cost of using this strategy. The college has a clear rationale to justify this generous deployment of staff, but it needs to be kept under review.

Resources

- 105 The college manages available resources well, but the provision of learning resources is currently unsatisfactory. There are significant shortages of resources in design and technology, ICT, mathematics and sociology. In mathematics there are no computers within the department, the graphical calculators are obsolete and there is a general lack of equipment for practical mathematical activities. Similarly, in design and technology, students have insufficient access to computers to enhance their designing and making activities. The overall provision of computers within the college is below the average for secondary schools and, in the sixth form, there are not enough computers available for the students to use. The art department has access to an exceptional range of original works of art held within and around the college. At present, however, teachers are failing to make the best use of this valuable resource.

- 106 The college is making good use of new technology where it exists and where teaching staff are confident and competent. Staff are keen to learn about the use of new equipment and materials. There is good use of interactive white boards, multi-media projectors, digital cameras, laptop computers and increasing use of the college's intranet. There are good examples of use in physical education, film studies and geography.

Accommodation

- 107 The limitation of the accommodation is managed very well and accommodation overall is satisfactory. There are very good facilities for physical education, providing a broad range of indoor and outdoor spaces. The successful Sports College bid is likely to provide further improvements to the facilities, both for students in the college and for the use of the wider community. Accommodation within a number of subject teaching rooms is cramped, inhibiting the range of teaching and learning styles that can be used. Some lessons in art, graphics, modern foreign languages and sociology are taught in rooms that are too small for the size of groups using them. Within design and technology, the large open 3D area does not provide an environment in which effective teaching and learning can take place. The drama studio provides a good space but it needs refurbishing, particularly the floor. Accommodation for the teaching of students with special educational needs is good, with enough rooms for working with small groups, as well as a base for keeping teaching resources and students' records.
- 108 The Information Centre is very well managed. Staff and students use the area effectively to support learning. Though limited in size, it is a popular place for private study and research. Book stocks, however, are quite limited, and financial support has gradually fallen over recent years. Sixth-form students do not have enough places to study outside lessons. Although they use the Information Centre, space is very tight for the large number of students in the sixth form.
- 109 The college recognises areas where further improvement is required, such as remodelling the accommodation for design and technology and extending the Information Centre. The current building programme is intended to provide enhanced facilities for mathematics and allow for further phased refurbishment and extension of the science laboratories. The site is very well maintained. Despite the narrowness of the corridors, the shortage of social areas and cramped dining room, students use the site in a mature and orderly way.

Sixth form

Leadership and management

- 110 Leadership of post-16 provision is good; clear direction is provided for the work of the sixth form. There are very good relationships and a strongly held commitment to the principle of equality of opportunity for all. Students show genuine respect towards each other, have an unforced confidence and develop maturity in the partnership they establish with their teachers. Consequently, outcomes in terms of personal development and results are high.
- 111 Governors and senior managers have a good overview of the strengths, weaknesses and the operation of the sixth form. The college management plan provides a framework of priorities and action points are detailed and practical, but the longer-term development of post-16 provision and its distinctive relationship to the college as

a whole is not expressed explicitly. Day-to-day management and co-ordination is effective and the post-16 team is being strengthened. Management at the level of subjects and courses is strong, retention rates are good and the proportion of students who complete courses is high. The pastoral and work-related provision for students on intermediate level GNVQ courses requires improvement.

Resources and financial management

- 112 Teachers are well qualified, experienced and enthusiastic about the subjects they teach and are continuing to make a determined effort to ensure that the new modular AS and A-level courses are delivered successfully. Systems are in place to monitor standards regularly, good quality data are available, and a well-defined vision for improvement has supported high achievement. The analysis of subject performance is integrated fully within the annual cycle of reviews, but actions following analysis are not targeted enough to improving specific post-16 provision and outcomes. Resources available are sufficient to meet the needs of sixth-form courses.
- 113 Having identified achievement in Years 10 and 11 as a key priority, the college has deployed its staffing budget with a bias towards that stage, subsidised by part of the income for the sixth form. This is a sound decision but should be reviewed regularly as priorities change. Value for money in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory. At present, curricular provision and achievement in the sixth form are good, so there are no significant immediate effects on the sixth form, and the sixth form is cost-effective. As with the main college, best value principles are mostly applied well, though more could be done to compare students' performance with schools nationally. Post-16 education provides good value for money. However, financial management takes place without benefit of a rationale for spending in relation to the sixth form, and expenditure is not being tracked in detail. At present there is a small imbalance between the income for post-16 students and the cost of sixth-form provision.

WHAT SHOULD THE COLLEGE DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

- 114 To raise standards further in Years 10 and 11 and improve the quality of learning, the college management, governors and staff should:
1. Improve students' achievements in mathematics, modern foreign languages and religious education by:
 - planning activities in lessons in mathematics and modern foreign languages to raise expectation, build on what students already know and increase the pace of learning; and
 - providing specialist guidance and enough curriculum time for the teaching of religious education in line with the requirement of the locally Agreed Syllabus; (this issue is carried over from the 1997 inspection).

See paragraphs 139 to 144; 205 to 212 and 230 to 233.
 2. Improve the rate of progress of gifted and talented students and of boys by:
 - applying the recently agreed policy consistently across subjects to move the high proportion of sound teaching to good or better;
 - planning for extended learning tasks and improving challenge in lessons;
 - offering open-ended activities which stimulate creative and independent research;
 - setting learning targets which explain clearly to students how to reach higher levels of attainment; and

- evaluating the research currently started on boys' learning, agreeing strategies to meet their needs and raising expectations, particularly in subjects where they underperform.

See paragraphs 8 to 10 and 46.

3. Improve students' personal development by:
 - raising staff awareness of the opportunities for spiritual and multicultural development;
 - creating more opportunities for spiritual development and for the study of differences in cultural customs, beliefs and behaviour; and
 - providing more opportunities for active participation and citizenship.

See paragraphs 70, 73 and 163.

Sixth form

1. Seek to engage and stimulate genuine active participation of students in the life of the sixth form by:
 - ensuring that students have a voice and that they feel involved;
 - analysing what students would like to see improved, including issues raised in the inspection questionnaire; and
 - providing more opportunities for students to be consulted, take responsibility and exercise their citizenship skills.

See paragraphs 67, 83 and 84.

2. Improve provision for:
 - vocational courses and for students on one-year courses.

See paragraphs 64 and 65.

3. Improve students' personal development by:
 - providing more opportunities for spiritual development; and
 - providing for the teaching and learning of religious education.

See paragraphs 67, 70 and 232.

The college should also consider the following subsidiary issues:

- The use of registration time.
- Vocational provision in Years 10 and 11.
- Development of numeracy skills.
- Full delivery of the citizenship programme of studies.
- Improvement to learning resources.
- Improvements to reports to parents.
- Meeting the statutory requirements identified in the report.

PROVISION FOR VISUALLY IMPAIRED STUDENTS

- 115 The Local Education Authority funds a base for visually impaired students, located at Bosworth Community College. Currently there are four students in the department in Years 11, 12 and 13. All students have a statement of special educational needs for their visual difficulties. Some students also have difficulties with aspects of learning as a result of their visual impairment and a small minority have emotional problems. When operating to its full capacity the resource base can provide support for nine students. In addition, the support team based at Bosworth Community College provides outreach support and technical expertise for pupils and students with visual impairment in other schools and colleges.
- 116 Students take appropriate accredited courses and achieve good levels of success at GCSE, AS and A2 examinations. The standards of students' work are similar to students of the same age in mainstream schools. For example, during a Year 12 French lesson, a blind student demonstrated a good knowledge and understanding of current aspects of politics in France and how these both differed from and bore some similarities to the British governmental systems. He was confident to enter into a dialogue with the teacher about the various political parties, their leaders and the merits of the French electoral system. The standard of his spoken French was good, pronunciation and intonation were accurate, as was the use of vocabulary and grammatical structure. On occasions, visually impaired students make better progress and achieve higher standards than their classmates because of the high quality specialist support that they receive to enable them to participate fully in class. During the inspection an example of this was observed in a Year 12 chemistry lesson. The support teacher ensured that, during investigative practical work, the student had full access to the resources required and followed the same instructional text through the media of Braille. The support teacher was skilled in being able to ensure the student's safety without being intrusive or restricting his independent learning activities. As a result, he worked conscientiously and sustained a high level of interest in his work. This resulted in the student showing a more informed and mature interpretation of the learning objective for the lesson in the culminating discussions about different preparations of ethanol. Raising standards and enabling students to achieve their full potential are priorities in the resource base, and additional revision is planned to help the students studying for examinations. The department applies for special consideration for visually impaired pupils taking GCSE AS and A2 examinations to enable them to have time to complete their work, and so adequately reflect their real achievement.
- 117 The Local Education Authority's philosophy is to enable students to work alongside their peers in the mainstream college as much as possible, whilst giving focused support for their specific individual needs in the resource base. These needs are mainly associated with the development of aspects of literacy necessary to promote good study skills, such as ways to take notes and how these are accessed for revision. Students' standards in this area are sometimes below those of students of the same age who do not have a visual impairment. To help students, the resource base staff support them well with their ongoing work and prepare them to access future lessons, such as by being tutored individually beforehand. The balance of support is decided appropriately on assessed specific individual need. A contributory factor to this effectiveness is the range of expertise the resource base staff possess and an appropriate ratio of support assistants available to facilitate individual programmes. The focus on providing students with access to a fully inclusive education is very good. Care has been taken to reflect the rights and duties

introduced by the Special Needs and Disability Act of 2001 and the fundamental principles of the revised Code of Practice, effective since 2002.

- 118 Throughout the college students with visual impairment are taught well. Lessons observed, including one-to-one support sessions, whilst being good overall, varied between satisfactory and very good. Where teaching is very good, such as in a Year 13 psychology lesson about estimating intelligence quotients, there are high expectations of students' application to work, behaviour and presentation. Discussions reinforce and extend the students' knowledge and understanding of the subject and make students use and improve their thinking and intellectual skills. This leads to very good gains in learning and has a positive effect on students' attitudes, which are generally very good, and often excellent. Relationships are very good between adults and students. Where Braille is used as a significant means of communication, full discussion takes place about the students' work and this enables them to think about how well they have worked and what they have learned. Where teaching is good, such as in a Year 11 information and communications technology lesson linked to science where PowerPoint presentations were based on genetic modifications, inheritance and selection, the task was challenging and the teacher and supporting adult used questioning skills well to assess the student's knowledge and understanding.
- 119 Most lessons are brisk and intensive; this keeps students on task. In all teaching a lot of discussion takes place in order to help students, because they cannot easily access the incidental body language that takes place within mainstream lessons. Although no unsatisfactory lessons were observed, there are, on occasions, some weaknesses in teaching provided by mainstream staff. There is sometimes a reluctance on the part of the teacher to allow the students to demonstrate their independence, and expectations of what they are able to achieve are too low. For example, in a Year 11 biology lesson about mutation, a visually impaired student had been provided with appropriately enlarged text and this enabled her to progress through her work independently. As she opted not to be sidetracked by many of the group who were adept at deflecting the teacher from the main point of the lesson she completed her work far in advance of her classmates. However, opportunities were missed to reinforce her learning and extend her knowledge and understanding of the subject through the provision of research tasks or other such independent learning activity. In discussion with the student it emerged she found the work too easy.
- 120 The inclusion of students with visual impairment in the mainstream lessons is very good. Most teachers have been provided with training that has been very effective in raising their awareness of the needs of this group of students. This was observed in a Year 11 humanities lesson where the visually impaired student had minimal additional support but made much better progress than the rest of the class because the teacher ensured the student was confident about what to do and could easily access audio-visual components of the lesson. This capitalised on his high level of self-motivation.
- 121 Through the Local Education Authority the resource base has devised a comprehensive and helpful policy and file of information that are instructive and easy to implement. Rarely do teachers forget the need for these pupils to be seated where they can hear and, if possible, clearly see the teacher. Teachers who have not availed themselves of training opportunities are less effective in recognising and meeting the needs of students with visual impairment. Instead they resort to relying on the support and expertise of specialist staff. Students' classmates are also very aware of the needs of those who have visual problems and are conscious of the

importance of addressing them by name. The quality of support by learning support assistants is very good, both in the department and in the mainstream setting. This is because the support assistants understand the specific needs of the students very well. They give appropriate help when needed but encourage independence. However, not all teachers value or use their expertise to good effect, but have a tendency to view their presence in lessons as support for a larger group of students.

- 122 The resource base supports the students well in order that they can access the mainstream curriculum. Staff write individual education plans for each student. These are made available to subject teachers and shared both with students and their parents. The focus of the plans is primarily based on literacy development resulting from visual impairment. They are reviewed every term. However, subject teachers are not proactive in evaluating or monitoring students' progress towards meeting such targets in their lessons. The quality of students' records is very good. They provide comprehensive information about the standards of work students achieve and their rate of progress over time. The assessment and monitoring of students' academic performance are very good. Good use is made of the assessment information to inform the specialist teacher's planning. When individual education plans are reviewed, targets achieved are recorded and linked to success criteria. However, there is little reference to visually impaired students' level of ability in mainstream class teachers' planning or whether students are functioning at expected levels. Therefore, they have no clear record of how quickly or slowly visually impaired students learn and many subject teachers do not have sufficient information to ensure that they plan lessons which are promoting each student's full potential. There is a tendency to rely on support staff to undertake this responsibility.
- 123 There are well established links with employers and colleges of further education that provide suitable employment and training opportunities. Very good pastoral and academic support is provided by the specialist visual impairment teacher for students considering a university placement. She accompanies students on visits and encourages them to consider all their options. Visually impaired students are encouraged to participate fully in extra-curricular activities alongside their classmates and benefit greatly from an annual skiing trip to places such as Canada.
- 124 Students are well cared for and safe. Staff know students very well. There are very effective partnerships with other agencies such as the careers service, RNIB and Guide Dogs for the Blind. Child protection systems are good. Procedures for monitoring and improving attendance and good behaviour are also effective. Liaison with outside agencies is good, including optometry services. Parents are readily encouraged to contribute their views and opinions at annual review meetings, as are the students. However, because annual review meetings are convened and chaired by the college's special educational needs co-ordinator, and not the visual impairment co-ordinator, parents are not always sufficiently confident to attend or share all their concerns. On a day-to-day basis the special educational needs co-ordinator has no responsibility for the visually impaired students. The 'open door' policy of the resource base staff promotes good relationships amongst all those involved. This helps students understand the importance of taking more responsibility for themselves as they get older. As a result their skills of independence improve and they readily accept responsibility for maintaining and caring for their own equipment which, for one student, includes the care of a guide dog. Their attitudes to learning and their behaviour are exemplary.

- 125 The management of the resource base by the co-ordinator is very good and all staff work very well as a team. Good procedures are in place to link with all subject teachers through the maintenance of very good quality notes made by support staff in lessons. These notes indicate how well students achieved and how they may need more help. The Local Education Authority has been considerate in its allocation of staff who, between them, have a wide range of experience and expertise. However, there are not yet any formal procedures in place for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning provided by the resource base staff. As a result, individuals do not know their strengths or areas in which they need to improve. Nevertheless, the co-ordinator for vision support and the department staff do monitor the value for money provided by the service by analysing students' progress, including examination results, and through university placements, as well as staff appraisal and evaluating service evaluation data compiled from its users.
- 126 The Local Education Authority's management of the service is good. However, the lack of a formally documented remit for the work of the visual impairment team has led to some confusion within the college with regard to their involvement and responsibility for managing the team. This is unsatisfactory as it is causing confusion. The visual impairment team feel they need to respond to several lines of management, not just the Local Education Authority.
- 127 The visual impairment resource base is very well equipped with specialist materials and good quality information and communications technology hardware. Students have their own laptop computer and this provides an invaluable aid to their learning. Staffing levels are good and the range of expertise is very good. However, because the majority of staff are employed on temporary contracts, it is not uncommon for support staff to gain experience and then quickly move elsewhere when similar posts on permanent contracts become available. This is having a detrimental impact on the service because it is failing to provide continuity of support for the students and it is not proving to be cost effective in terms of constantly investing in basic staff training.
- 128 The accommodation currently occupied by the team is unsatisfactory. However, plans are in place for the base to be relocated to more suitable rooms in the college in the next academic year. The general college environment is not well equipped in terms of notices in Braille, nor is the decor, in terms of colour scheme, user friendly for those visually impaired students who are partially sighted.
- 129 It is not possible to make a judgement about improvements since the last inspection as the resource base was not reported on separately. The resource co-ordinator is aware of the need to continue to strive to enhance provision and has identified clear priorities in the development plan. These include refining individual education plan targets so that they are more precise and encouraging greater input of parent, student and subject teacher into setting and evaluating each target.

PART C: COLLEGE DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

| | | |
|--|---------------|-----|
| Number of lessons observed | Years 10 – 11 | 165 |
| | Sixth form | 101 |
| Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and students | | 74 |

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

| | Excellent | Very good | Good | Satisfactory | Unsatisfactory | Poor | Very Poor |
|----------------------|-----------|-----------|------|--------------|----------------|------|-----------|
| Years 10 - 11 | | | | | | | |
| Number | 2 | 30 | 66 | 52 | 12 | 2 | 0 |
| Percentage | 1% | 19% | 40% | 32% | 7% | 1% | 0% |
| Sixth form | | | | | | | |
| Number | 3 | 31 | 33 | 28 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| Percentage | 3% | 32% | 33% | 29% | 2% | 1% | 0% |

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching

Information about the college's students

| Students on the college's roll | Y10 – Y11 | Sixth form |
|---|-----------|------------|
| Number of students on the college's roll | 890 | 359 |
| Number of full-time students known to be eligible for free school meals | 40 | 3 |

| Special educational needs | Y10 – Y11 | Sixth form |
|--|-----------|------------|
| Number of students with statements of special educational needs | 30 | 7 |
| Number of students on the college's special educational needs register | 174 | 12 |

| English as an additional language | No of students |
|---|----------------|
| Number of students with English as an additional language | 50 |

| Student mobility in the last school year | No of students |
|---|----------------|
| Students who joined the college other than at the usual time of first admission | 27 |
| Students who left the college other than at the usual time of leaving | 68 |

Attendance

Authorised absence

| | % |
|---------------------------|-----|
| College data | 4.3 |
| National comparative data | 7.8 |

Unauthorised absence

| | % |
|---------------------------|-----|
| College data | 3.4 |
| National comparative data | 1.2 |

Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

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

| | Year | Boys | Girls | Total |
|--|------|------|-------|-------|
| Number of registered students in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year | 2002 | 219 | 203 | 422 |

| GCSE results | | 5 or more grades A* to C | 5 or more grades A*-G | 1 or more grades A*-G |
|---|----------|--------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Numbers of students achieving the standard specified | Boys | 94 | 206 | 214 |
| | Girls | 116 | 193 | 197 |
| | Total | 210 | 399 | 411 |
| Percentage of students achieving the standard specified | College | 50 (50) | 95 (93) | 97 (95) |
| | National | 50 (48) | 91 (91) | 96 (96) |

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

| GCSE results | | GCSE point score |
|---------------------------------|----------|------------------|
| Average point score per student | School | 39.2 |
| | National | 39.8 |

Figures in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

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

| | | For candidates entered for GCE A / AS / Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations | | |
|----------|-----------------------------------|--|-------|------|
| | | Boys | Girls | All |
| Collegel | Number of candidates | 70 | 81 | 151 |
| | Average point score per candidate | 17.2 | 19.1 | 18.2 |
| National | Average point score per candidate | 16.9 | 18.0 | 17.5 |

| | | For candidates entered for GCE A / AS examinations | | | For candidates entered for Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations | | |
|----------|-----------------------------------|--|-------|------|---|-------|------|
| | | Boys | Girls | All | Boys | Girls | All |
| College | Number of candidates | 62 | 79 | 141 | 8 | 5 | 13 |
| | Average point score per candidate | 18.5 | 18.9 | 18.7 | 7.5 | 11 | 8.8 |
| National | Average point score per candidate | 16.9 | 17.9 | 17.4 | 9.8 | 11.4 | 10.6 |

Ethnic background of students

Exclusions in the last school year

| Categories used in the Annual School Census | No of students on roll | Number of fixed period exclusions | Number of permanent exclusions |
|---|------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| White – British | 1138 | 33 | 2 |
| White – Irish | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| White – any other White background | 21 | 0 | 0 |
| Mixed – White and Black Caribbean | 9 | 2 | 0 |
| Mixed – White and Black African | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Mixed – White and Asian | 5 | 0 | 0 |
| Mixed – any other mixed background | 7 | 0 | 0 |
| Asian or Asian British - Indian | 43 | 0 | 0 |
| Asian or Asian British - Pakistani | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background | 4 | 0 | 0 |
| Black or Black British – Caribbean | 7 | 0 | 0 |
| Black or Black British – African | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| Black or Black British – any other Black background | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Chinese | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| Any other ethnic group | 7 | 1 | 0 |
| No ethnic group recorded | 0 | 0 | 0 |

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y10 – Y13

| | |
|--|------|
| Total number of qualified teachers (FTE) | 74 |
| Number of pupils per qualified teacher | 16.2 |

Education support staff: Y10 – Y13

| | |
|---|------|
| Total number of education support staff | 39 |
| Total aggregate hours worked per week | 1102 |

Deployment of teachers: Y10 – Y13

| | |
|---|----|
| Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes | 75 |
|---|----|

Average teaching group size: Y10 – Y11

| | |
|-------------|------|
| Key Stage 4 | 21.4 |
|-------------|------|

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

| | |
|----------------|---------|
| Financial year | 2001-02 |
|----------------|---------|

| | £ |
|--|---------|
| Total income | 3941748 |
| Total expenditure | 3969496 |
| Expenditure per student | 3178 |
| Balance brought forward from previous year | -18067 |
| Balance carried forward to next year | -45815 |

Recruitment of teachers

| | |
|--|------|
| Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years | 32.5 |
| Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years | 26.7 |

| | |
|--|---|
| Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE) | 0 |
| Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE) | 4 |
| Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE) | 0 |

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

| | |
|-----------------------------------|-------|
| Number of questionnaires sent out | 1,249 |
| Number of questionnaires returned | 182 |

Percentage of responses in each category

| | Strongly agree | Tend to agree | Tend to disagree | Strongly disagree | Don't know |
|--|----------------|---------------|------------------|-------------------|------------|
| My child likes school. | 24 | 62 | 8 | 5 | 1 |
| My child is making good progress in school. | 30 | 56 | 9 | 1 | 4 |
| Behaviour in the school is good. | 19 | 49 | 13 | 7 | 12 |
| My child gets the right amount of work to do at home. | 13 | 52 | 24 | 9 | 2 |
| The teaching is good. | 10 | 64 | 13 | 2 | 11 |
| I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on. | 17 | 48 | 22 | 10 | 3 |
| I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem. | 33 | 54 | 7 | 2 | 4 |
| The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best. | 34 | 54 | 5 | 2 | 5 |
| The school works closely with parents. | 15 | 39 | 29 | 8 | 9 |
| The school is well led and managed. | 13 | 55 | 11 | 4 | 17 |
| The school is helping my child become mature and responsible. | 21 | 56 | 12 | 4 | 7 |
| The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons. | 11 | 41 | 15 | 6 | 27 |

Summary of parents' and carers' responses

Their children enjoy their studies, are happy and feel secure at the college. Parents feel that they can approach teachers and staff if they need information or have concerns. Homework is either not set or too much is given at once. Parents would like better information about their child's progress and how they could do better. Some parents feel that the range of activities outside lessons is too narrow. Two parents were not happy about lack of provision for Spanish in the sixth form. A few parents were concerned about staff changes in science and management of behaviour issues in a few classes.

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

ENGLISH

Overall, the quality of provision in English is good.

Strengths

- Good teaching, which enables students to reach, and often exceed, the national average.
- Good relationships between teachers and students leading to good learning.
- Shared approaches to teaching and learning across the department, ensuring consistency of practice.

Areas for improvement

- Higher-attaining students are not always given sufficient challenge to achieve their best.
- The attainment of the boys is less good than that of the girls.

- 130 GCSE results in 2002 were significantly above the national average in English and above the national average in English Literature. These results represent good achievement taking account of the attainment of students when they enter the college. The trend in results over three years has been upward, apart from a dip in 2001. On average, boys achieve significantly less well than girls. This is similar to the national picture and reflects a similar difference when students enter the college.
- 131 In work seen, attainment at the end of Year 11 is at the national expectation, with a significant minority of students reaching levels above those normally seen. Students achieve well. They talk, explain and describe with confidence, and most adjust what they say to take account of their audience and their purpose. In a series of formal talks to the whole class, one student was able to command the interest of her audience when talking about Greek culture, by using anecdotes and supporting materials to enliven her delivery. On occasions, students speak less formally than the context requires, and in formal talks students sometimes lack the confidence to speak without notes. Students usually discuss well in groups, listen well and respect the views of others.
- 132 Students' reading is often good, and the development of reading is supported well through close analysis of a range of texts. This was evident, for example, in work on pre-1914 literature. The methods used help students to develop effective reading strategies and to acquire discrimination. In a Year 11 lesson, students identified key features of a poem, such as alliteration and internal rhymes, and discussed the effect produced by the poet's technique. More able students are not always provided with sufficient challenge in their reading during lessons, but students with special needs are generally well supported.
- 133 Standards in writing is at least as expected, and there were examples of work of a high standard, with students displaying commitment and sensitivity, and showing evidence of increasing sophistication in the control of language. All students are well supported through the use of frameworks and models, ensuring that students, particularly those of average or lower ability, develop their understanding of how to structure their writing. In one Year 10 lesson, an effective stimulus for writing was provided through the use of a film extract followed by student discussion of character and motive. This led to some original and perceptive ideas to help shape students'

own writing. Opportunities outside lessons are provided which challenge more-able students in writing, such as the annual journalism competition, but opportunities for them to achieve the best progress in lessons are less frequent, and there are too few opportunities for the teacher to help these students to develop further the craft of writing.

- 134 The quality of teaching and learning is good overall, and there were examples of very good teaching and learning. Teachers plan carefully and set clear learning objectives for students in lessons. Across the department, teachers share ideas and resources, and common approaches to teaching ensure consistency of practice. Teachers know their subject well and employ a range of well-targeted strategies to develop students' learning, including direct teaching and explanation at key points in lessons. Teachers make good use of video, storyboarding and brain-storming to stimulate writing. Teachers employ effective teaching strategies in text work. Opportunities in one lesson explored visual language and the messages conveyed. In a series of lessons on poems from other cultures, teachers encouraged the full engagement of students with the poetry through stimulating work around Pakistani culture. As a result, students were engaged in good text work on the language used and its impact, and discussed the concept of nationalism and the feelings of alienation described in the poem.
- 135 Approaches to challenging the most able students in lessons, and to improving the attainment of boys so that it matches more closely that of the girls require further development. The teaching team should further develop and extend the range of teaching strategies used in mixed ability classes to ensure that there is appropriate challenge for all groups of students to allow them to make the best possible progress. The department has used laptops to support students in the drafting stage of their written work, but the full range of applications of information technology is not yet exploited fully to support students' learning.
- 136 Students respond well in English and have positive attitudes to the subject. Teachers establish good working relationships with them, and students are confident to describe their personal responses and to express their opinions in an atmosphere of mutual respect. Teachers' enthusiasm for their subject encourages students to engage with the work and to think for themselves. Students generally listen to the views of others and react well to pair and group work.
- 137 Leadership of the department is effective in setting a clear direction for English and focusing effort on the development of teaching and learning. Roles and responsibilities are made clear within a collegiate approach to the management of the department. Due regard is paid to monitoring teaching, with feedback to teachers and opportunities for targeted training to help to develop further the quality of teaching. There is a clear focus on raising attainment. Teachers know their students well and make use of a range of data to check on their progress. Students are given feedback about their strengths and weaknesses through marking and teachers' comment, but individual learning targets are not set to enable students to focus clearly enough on the next steps in their learning. Resources for teaching English are adequate and teachers work hard to produce their own materials to increase the range of resources used.
- 138 The department has made good progress since the previous inspection. Standards have risen and the quality of teaching has improved. Lower-attaining students now make good progress, but the department does not give enough attention to the needs of the highest attainers. Students now have satisfactory, and often good, listening

skills. The department now monitors teaching and has improved its approaches to monitoring the progress of groups and individuals. The department is therefore well placed to succeed further.

MATHEMATICS

Overall, the quality of provision in mathematics is unsatisfactory.

Strengths

- Some of the strategies to improve results.
- Some very good engagement of lower-attaining students in whole-class dialogue.
- Some very clear explanations of new learning though good dialogue in class.
- The relationships between staff and students.

Areas for improvement

- Students do not achieve the high standards they should.
- Inconsistent quality of teaching across the department, with a narrow range of teaching and learning activities.
- Accountability for quality and standards within the department.
- The sequencing of the programme of topics taught.
- Students' knowledge of how well they are doing and how to improve.

139 Students enter the school with above-average attainment at age fourteen. This is not sustained, and GCSE results, although improving, have been below the national average for several years. Girls' results are higher than boys' and are close to the national average for girls. Nevertheless, the overall picture is that students at all levels of attainment do not achieve their potential. At the more and most able end of the spectrum, fewer students than average gain A*, A or B grades. Students with special needs make steady progress, because of the individual help they receive from additional staff in their lessons, but there is no specific programme of catch-up work for them.

140 The standard of work seen in most classes is below that expected at this stage. Some middle and above-average ability students towards the end of Year 11 are still learning the basic steps of trigonometry and many are not confident in calculating areas of shapes made up of combinations of others, such as a trapezium attached to a rectangle. Other high attainers apply their knowledge and skills better and break down a more complex problem involving a circle with radii, tangents and some triangles into suitable steps for angles and distances to be calculated. More-able students in Year 10 are beginning to handle surds (numbers expressed as square roots) confidently, but have yet to link the processes to the behaviour of ordinary numbers. In several lessons on fractions, decimals and percentages, many students had a good understanding of the main ideas and could deal with 25 per cent, 50 per cent, 10 per cent and combine them to find other percentages, skills which are usually acquired at a younger age. They found difficulty with other percentages. Students were often hampered by lack of appropriate understanding of place-value. In only the best lessons were students able to increase or decrease an amount by a given percentage. GCSE coursework showed good development of project investigations, starting with a hypothesis, exploration and discovery of patterns which enable generalisations to be made and the hypotheses to be evaluated. Good progress is being made in the optional statistics course. Students are adept at finding all the possible outcomes of combinations of two or more separate events and working out the probability that each will occur.

- 141 Teaching is good, and sometimes very good, in about half of lessons, but has key weaknesses in a fifth, which makes the overall provision unsatisfactory. Almost all lessons use the same teaching and learning method, with a starter activity, then an introduction of new learning by the teacher, followed by students completing exercises from the textbook. This was effective where the teacher's introduction was highly interactive with the class, with a lively and well-judged discussion prompted by interesting and challenging oral questions, backed up by simple diagrams on the whiteboard. Pace, sense of humour and being prepared for students to explore misunderstandings until they realised why they were on the wrong track were all features of the best lessons. There are several weaker aspects. In almost all lessons, students were taught a new method or procedure with no reference to a practical application within the students' experience. Students' only motivation for learning the method was 'to pass the examination', and their understanding of how the new process related to other parts of the subject was low. Relevance was good in one lesson where increases or decreases in prices by a percentage were referenced to buying and selling designer clothes and sports equipment. Where the dialogue between teacher and class consisted of short questions of a 'right or wrong' nature, few students took part and their thinking was less well developed. Few lessons concluded with an effective summing up that took the class back to the intended points to be learned. This part of the lesson was often too rushed, and many students took little from it. Where homework was set it was mundane. Apart from the coursework, much students' work is self-marked or unmarked, so they receive little guidance on how to improve. Students have a reasonable idea of the GCSE grade they are likely to get, based on results from the coursework and examination modules taken so far. They are not given regular feedback on the quality of their classwork and homework, and how it matches with the examination grades. Although Year 11 students are only about six school weeks before the final examination, they have had little experience of practice papers.
- 142 Some students are enthusiastic, clearly enjoying the subject greatly. Many are positively compliant with mathematics, so behaviour in most classes is good. In bottom sets, there is a wide range of different learning and behavioural needs, yet the lessons are planned for the whole class with only occasional different activities within the class. This does not make best use of the two teachers and one learning assistant present. Whole-class teaching in these groups often leads to inappropriate behaviour by a minority of students, which affects the learning of others.
- 143 Leadership and management within the department are unsatisfactory. Positive decisions to raise standards have been taken, such as changing to a modular examination course and considering strategies to overcome gender-based attitudes to the subject. Appropriate priority has been given to improving GCSE coursework. There has been some lesson observation, though this has focused mainly on pace and structure, rather than on the teaching methods, learning and standards achieved. Analysis of previous results has been limited to comparisons within the school, rather than with schools nationally, and concentrated on achievement of GCSE grade C, omitting the underachievement at grades A*, A and B. The scheme of work consists of a list of topics and exercises, with no reference to teaching activities, applications of mathematics or alternative learning for the most and least-able students. The programme sequence leaves some key learning in geometry and trigonometry until very late in the course. Another example is expecting students to use algebra in the coursework before they have covered it sufficiently in the teaching programme. Responsibilities and accountabilities for staff are not clearly in place; this has led to the inconsistencies in the quality of provision in the subject. The development plan is

mainly focused on maintenance, rather than providing a clear direction for the department's future work. There is little use of ICT to support learning in the subject.

- 144 Improvement since the previous inspection has been less than satisfactory. Punctuality and girls' results are better, but students are still underachieving. Behaviour has improved, though learning is still hindered by a disruptive atmosphere in some classes. Teaching, although better, remains of inconsistent quality.

SCIENCE

Overall, the quality of provision in science is satisfactory.

Strengths

- There is some very good teaching, particularly of chemistry.
- The development of literacy skills.
- The use of data to identify strategies for improving students' work in science investigations.
- The management structure of the department.

Areas for improvement

- Ensuring that students are appropriately challenged; for example, by taking into account the good knowledge of science when students join the college.
- Increasing the amount of good and very good teaching and eliminating unsatisfactory teaching.
- The use of computers, particularly for data capture from electronic sensors.
- The use of regular homework as a means of raising students' achievement.

- 145 GCSE results in science are at the national average. Results have improved steadily over a long period of time. In 2001 they were well above the national average. In 2002, a dip occurred and about half the students achieved an A*-C grade; however, this is in line with the national average. More-able students perform well, the proportion achieving the highest grade was double the national average in 2002. Girls perform slightly better than boys, though the difference is only half that found nationally.

- 146 The standard of work seen in Years 10 and 11 is in line with national standards. However, when students start the college their standards are significantly higher than those found nationally. There is therefore insufficient challenge in too much of the work students do. Too much time is spent in some lessons on simpler work at the expense of the more complex. Investigative skills are well developed, in particular the ability to plan investigations using knowledge of science to generate well-considered hypotheses. Students' ability to evaluate investigations is less well developed, though this is improving. There is no significant difference in the progress made in science by boys and girls. Students with special needs were well supported in most lessons, and their progress is good. The development of literacy is good. In many classes students maintain a glossary of terms in their books. Teachers emphasise well the importance of these terms and in most classrooms there are displays of terms which are updated to ensure that the key words refer to the topic in hand. Oracy is well developed with students able to speak articulately at length. In one lesson, a girl of above-average ability was asked to explain a complex piece of work about osmosis to the class. She did so with exceptional confidence and put the abstract and interrelated ideas about osmosis across very successfully.

- 147 Teaching is satisfactory overall, but there are wide variations. This is reflected in the progress which students make. In one science class a student had the ability to work out how the structure of a leaf was designed in order for it to carry out its function successfully. However, the task in the lesson which occupied the most time was simply to colour in a diagram of a leaf. This is not a good use of time. In another lesson, the level of challenge was higher and students of the same age were successfully engaged on an analysis of eye-witness accounts of an earthquake, cross-referencing these to a scale of earthquake strength by which means they were able to identify the epicentre of the earthquake and hypothesise what was its cause. Computers are used in science teaching to a limited extent; for example, to do research using the Internet, which students find motivating. There is very little use of computers to collect data from electronic sensors. The marking of students' work is inconsistent. In some cases the work is marked very thoroughly but, too often, marking is inaccurate and does not give advice about how work can be improved. Homework is set too infrequently.
- 148 Students' attitudes to their work are good. They are keen to ask and answer questions, sometimes of considerable demand, and are attentive in lessons. Students' ability to work independently is good overall. A number of students, predominantly boys, do not organise their work well and it lacks important details. The effect of this is that answers to test questions sometimes lack essential detail.
- 149 Leadership and management of the department are satisfactory. There is a plan for improvement in which the importance of continuing to raise the standards of students' learning is recognised, but the plan contains too many priorities, lacks detail on teaching, learning and standards. The management structure of the department is good. It is beginning to be effective and the new coordinators are keen to make improvements. A strength is the use of data to identify areas in which students' work is relatively weak. This has led to an improvement in the ways in which students learn how to evaluate their investigations. Most students know what grade they should be aiming for and how well they are doing. A very good initiative taken to improve the teaching of chemistry has resulted in writing detailed plans of high quality for lessons which all teachers can use. Work to ensure good quality teaching has led to many observations of lessons. This work now needs to be followed up more effectively to verify the impact of teaching on students' work and on their learning.
- 150 Since the previous inspection there has been good progress made on the pace at which students work in Year 10, but curricular planning still does not take into account the good knowledge of science with which students join the college. The quality of teaching has declined, partly as a result of the considerable staff turnover in the last two years. The school has done well to maintain a full complement of science teachers. The use of computers for sensing and data collection is still an area for development, though a start has been made. The department is well served by a team of good quality technicians. There are good health and safety procedures. The school Information Centre provides a good service to the department. It maintains a good, up-to-date range of science books which includes reference books as well as interesting and accessible science reading books.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths

- Course options provide a broad range of art, craft & design.
- The scale of work in 2D, 3D and textiles is bold.
- Relationships between students and their teachers are very good and provide a good climate for learning.

Areas for improvement

- Art lacks subject identity, with no specific development plan for example.
- Within 2D and 3D options there are insufficient art-based curricular experiences; in particular, the role of direct observational drawing and analysis, and other first-hand experiences.
- Projects are unsuitably paced. Stimulus and review are used too infrequently to provide a lesson shape.

- 151 GCSE results have generally been close to the national average, although results in 2002 were well below average and lower than other subjects at the college. The particularly poor results of boys, and absence of high grades, were contributory factors. Students make satisfactory progress in the subject although particular projects, for example, the 'Graffiti' project in 2D and ceramics in 3D, reveal the very good potential of boys and girls of all abilities. Students' ability is most effectively expressed in work where the characteristics of an art movement have been understood and then applied to their own experiences. For example, students who had studied surrealism in the 2D course were able to express their own imagination powerfully. Students use ICT confidently as a research tool, although experimentation with media is limited. Improving the role of the sketchbook is an area for development. An ambitious scale of work is managed in all media, although mixed media is underused.
- 152 The teaching of art is sound overall. Several teachers make effective use of other students' work to make objectives clear. Revisitation of projects is also managed well. Good support for individual students is common. The best teaching reflects the depth of the teacher's own making skills. For example, one teacher linked her own portfolio to mini-demonstrations. This use of personal art work enables students to learn by example. Several students were observed continuing work after school and expressed a passion for the material which mirrored that of the teacher. The range of approaches to learning, however, is too narrow. Problem solving dominates. The least effective lessons make too little use of visual and tactile starting points. Due to the wide range of commitments of teachers of the subject some limitations of subject knowledge and understanding are apparent and some teachers find insufficient opportunity to pursue creative skills fully. Too frequently lessons lack pace, and time is not set aside for teachers and students to review progress. Although students are allowed to choose from a variety of courses, learning within one option currently takes too little advantage of the range of teachers' expertise. However, relationships are good and create an effective climate for learning.
- 153 A satisfactory start has been made to subject management by the co-ordinator for art and faculty head, both new to the roles this year. The use of data, for example, has been improved and action on subject issues raised by the previous inspection accelerated. The vision which gives the subject its own specific identity is now an area for development. There is currently no specific development plan for art. Monitoring

and evaluation are restricted to an analysis of outcomes. More systematic analysis of teaching and learning is required in order to identify aspects other than merely behavioural issues as routes to improvement.

- 154 Students currently choose specialist course options before starting at the school. Curricular liaison with the contributory high schools is insufficiently developed to ensure that students build effectively on their strengths. Although students are regularly graded, the use of assessment to set individual targets during the course is underdeveloped. As a consequence, some students are unclear about how to use their skills to achieve greatest gains. Broad ranges of experiences are enjoyed across the range of art courses. However, within options students need to be provided with a wider choice in order to encounter themes such as those related to the human figure or multicultural stimuli. There is a variable range of accommodation used for the subject, some of which is unsuitable, and inhibits the nature of work, teacher and student movement and the use of display. The exceptional college collection of original art works is underused in Years 10 and 11.
- 155 Until recently, progress on the action points in the previous inspection has been slow. However, there is sufficient experience of past success, depth of individual teacher's talent and quality of students' achievement evident in particular projects for the subject to flourish in the current college ethos under a management team eager to re-establish the creative identity of the college.

BUSINESS STUDIES

The quality of provision is good.

Strengths

- Teachers are knowledgeable and well qualified.
- Relationships between teachers and students are good.
- There are effective procedures for assessing students' progress.
- The department is well managed.

Areas for improvement

- Increase the number of students achieving the highest GCSE grades.
- Better match of work and expectations to students' potential in some lessons in Year 10.
- Continue to develop strategies to encourage the more and most able to continue their studies in the sixth form.

- 156 Over recent years students' results at GCSE have been improving slightly. In 2002, results were below the national average. The percentage of students gaining A* and A grades was well below the national average. The department has worked hard in encouraging boys to see academic success as important and this has led to an improvement in their results. However, boys still underperform.
- 157 Students make better progress when the context of the learning is of interest to them; for example, the coursework in Year 10, where the students are building up a profile of their imaginary businesses. Their work shows a good understanding of the organisation of business and they use appropriate associated terminology. They make good progress in recalling, understanding and explaining concepts at various levels. They give examples to illustrate ideas, such as for a Deed of Partnership. In a Year 11 lesson, where they were given the pre-release examination case study on Cadbury Schweppes, they show a good understanding of the terms "multinational

company” and “horizontal integration” and apply this business theory to the case study confidently. More-able students achieve well; their very good grasp of terms like profit and loss and dividend enable them to articulate their ideas and report back to the class with confidence. However, there is evidence that some students are not working to their full potential and some are too dependent upon the teacher. Students have a good understanding of the grades they are predicted to achieve and the standard of their current work. Students integrate the use of computers into their learning programmes, demonstrating good use of e-mail or web sites to gain information for their studies.

- 158 Overall, the quality of teaching is good and this leads to good learning. Where teaching is good, explicit references are made to current business news and this has a positive impact upon students’ thinking. Teachers have high, but realistic, expectations in relation to what students should achieve. For example, in the Young Enterprise group, least able students used ICT effectively to produce charts and diagrams to show how their enterprise had made profit over time. Where there are shortcomings in otherwise satisfactory lessons, it is because teachers talk for too long and students are not actively engaged in learning by ‘doing’.
- 159 Students’ response to teaching is good. Most students show good levels of interest and concentrate productively on tasks. The few students, particularly in Year10, who appear less well motivated and are occasionally restless, still produce work of a satisfactory standard. Relationships are excellent. Students are mature and conscientious young adults who respect property and follow the instructions of their teachers.
- 160 The head of department is providing good leadership and management. This is evident in the day-to-day running of the department. Schemes of work are well written, but these do not include sufficient reference to teaching citizenship or widening students’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Monitoring of teaching and learning has become established across the department. However, staff need to ensure that appropriate teaching and learning strategies are put in place to raise achievement further and improve results. The department has a shared commitment to improvement and to meeting the departmental targets, and is well placed to make further progress.
- 161 Comments cannot be made on progress since the previous inspection because there was no specific report on this subject.

CITIZENSHIP

The quality of provision in citizenship is satisfactory.

Strengths

- A rigorous audit has identified strengths and weaknesses in provision.
- The recent appointment of a co-ordinator for citizenship has provided good direction and enhanced the importance of the subject.
- Students have positive attitudes to this area of the curriculum.

Areas for improvement

- Identify clear opportunities in the curriculum to encourage active citizenship for all students.
- Some subject teachers who are intended to contribute to the programme do not include citizenship objectives in their planning.

- 162 Standards in Year 11 are similar to those in most schools. The PSHE programme covers many important citizenship issues and gives the students opportunities to be informed and discuss topics affecting their personal development. All work undertaken has provided opportunities for students to think about, write and discuss relevant issues; however, skills are not sufficiently developed for all students.
- 163 No specific citizenship lessons were observed during the inspection. In the personal, social and health education lessons (PSHE), teaching is satisfactory overall, but the quality is inconsistent and dependent on individual tutors. In some subjects, lesson topics related to citizenship issues but were touched upon superficially rather than being fully explored. Links to citizenship were not brought out and explained. As a result, students' overall understanding of citizenship is limited. For example, in a Year 10 humanities lesson, a student named the gases that cause global warming and described the likely effects on sea levels and extreme weather events. However, no link was made to citizenship and students were not given the opportunity to discuss attitudes towards global warming and the issues for the world community. In a Year 10 law lesson, students developed their knowledge and understanding of the jury service, links to citizenship were made, but still not highlighted sufficiently for students to make connections with their citizenship curriculum. Across specific subjects, the strands of citizenship have been identified but are not yet specifically taught as citizenship and some opportunities to support the citizenship programmes of study are missed. This makes it very difficult to assess the contribution to citizenship of work in these subject areas.
- 164 Students' attitudes are satisfactory. In discussion, students showed that they felt the topics covered were generally important, but they were unclear about the structure of the provision or how the elements fit together.
- 165 During the last academic year the college audit of citizenship identified clearly where coverage is taking place in lessons as well as identifying the gaps. However, the statutory programmes of study are not yet covered in full. Planning does not yet show how skills, such as enquiry, participation and responsible action will be developed. The recent appointment of a citizenship co-ordinator has given good direction for the provision of citizenship. Resources are being developed, and assessment and recording procedures are being planned. Monitoring and evaluation of the teaching of citizenship will take place as part of whole-college procedures. The short course GCSE is being considered to enhance the provision of citizenship. The college's

provision for students' personal development gives it an excellent platform for further development of the subject.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Leadership and management of the subject by the head of faculty.
- Strategies introduced to raise achievement across the department.
- Students' attitudes within the subject.
- Relationships between staff and students.

Areas for improvement

- Addressing the accommodation and resourcing issues in the 3D area.
- Extending opportunities for students to use computer-aided designing and manufacturing techniques.
- Addressing the health and safety issues in the 3D area.

166 Students' results in the GCSE examinations over recent years have gradually improved, from 7 per cent below the national average at grades A* to C three years ago, to 3 per cent below average in 2002. During this time, girls' results have been generally close to the national average and consistently higher than boys' results. Girls have achieved grades similar to those in their other subjects, whilst boys' grades have been consistently lower than in their other subjects.

167 In Years 10 and 11, students are able to specialise in one material area within the department. Progress and achievement are sound overall and students extend their designing and making skills to produce a range of appropriate products within each material area. In the current Year 11, the attainment of students in the design and technology subjects is similar to that normally seen at this age.

168 In Year 10, students have embarked upon their major coursework projects and are making good progress at this early stage of the course. For example, in food in Year 10, students prepare a wide range of individual dishes for their project on special diets. They work confidently in the kitchen and produce work of a high standard. In electronics, students develop their knowledge and understanding by modelling a wide range of circuits, using both components and specialist software. In graphics, students designing 'pop-up' books construct a variety of different mechanisms in card to evaluate how to produce different kinds of movement. In ceramics, students making picture frames extend their drawing skills and use watercolour techniques with some confidence.

169 In Year 11, students have successfully completed a range of coursework projects that are matched closely to the requirements of the examinations in all material areas. The more and most able students have produced work of the highest grades. A good number of students in all material areas have used computers to enhance the presentation of the coursework folders, for example using spreadsheets to graphically record the results of questionnaires, the Internet to collect research material and a digital camera to record food dishes that have been prepared. However, only a minority of students have been able to use computers to enhance their designing and making due to limited access to equipment. Currently, students in Year 11 are making sound progress preparing for the examination paper in each material area.

Teachers have prepared a range of interesting practical activities to maintain students' motivation during the final weeks of the GCSE course. For example, in textiles, students practise their designing skills by carefully drawing designs for garments based on the theme of insects. In resistant materials, students work in groups to design computer workstations and model a variety of ideas to scale. In food, students work in groups and confidently prepare a variety of barbecue food for outdoor entertaining. Students with special educational needs integrate well into the mixed-ability groups and make sound progress developing their designing and making skills.

- 170 The quality of teaching overall is sound. In nearly half of lessons it is good or, occasionally, very good. Where teaching is most effective, lessons are planned well and students have a clear picture of what they are expected to achieve within the session. For example, in Year 10 food the group arrived promptly, well prepared from the previous lesson as to how they were going to make their recipes for 'ready made meals'. The teacher briefly reminded the group about working safely and presenting their work effectively. Students proceeded with their individual tasks, working independently at this early stage of the course. Teaching is effective when teachers are able to demonstrate skills clearly to students. For example in Year 10 resistant materials, the teacher demonstrated how to quickly render drawings using pastel crayon techniques. The group watched and listened attentively and they were soon able to render drawings of their own successfully. In all material areas, teachers provide good help and support on an individual basis within lessons, discussing the work completed and showing students how to proceed. Detailed coursework guides provide students with a clear picture of what they are expected to achieve with staged deadline dates for handing in their work. Good assessment procedures have been introduced to keep students up to date about how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve their coursework folders. Where teaching is less effective, teachers do not take the opportunity to set learning targets for students in lessons or to evaluate progress at the end of lessons by discussing the learning that has taken place and assessing the progress made. Teachers do not always take the opportunity to demonstrate skills to raise the standard of students' designing and making. For example, in a number of graphics lessons, students had no taught input during the lesson to extend their skills and techniques.
- 171 Students respond well and show a good level of interest in the subject. They settle down quickly and sustain concentration throughout lessons. Behaviour in lessons is good and students act responsibly in the design and technology rooms. They work well together, for example, when modelling the computer workstations. Relationships between students and their teachers are good. Students generally listen well, but there are few opportunities in lessons for them to engage in group and class discussions; for example, lessons in which they are required to talk about their own work or the work of others. In a small minority of lessons, students are not motivated by the tasks set and need to be constantly reminded to stay on task.
- 172 The recently appointed head of faculty is providing very good leadership and management of the teaching team. In terms of leadership, this is evident by the personal example being set to raise the quality of designing and making within the faculty. In terms of management, this is evident in the strategies being employed to raise levels of achievement, for example, involvement in the Leicestershire Key Stage 4 strategy and new approaches to the management and monitoring of coursework. There are significant resource and accommodation issues which are restricting attainment at the present time. The facilities for graphics are very cramped and do not present appropriate environments in which to design and make. In resistant

materials, the layout of machinery and equipment does not provide an environment in which effective teaching and learning can take place. The opportunity for students to use computer-aided design and manufacture is very restricted at the present time. A number of health and safety issues have been drawn to the attention of the school in relation to this working area.

- 173 Since the previous inspection, progress has been satisfactory. GCSE results have shown a gradual trend of improvement and students now show better behaviour and attitudes to the subject. Standards, overall, match those normally seen.

HUMANITIES

- 174 The humanities faculty includes geography, history, sociology and law. It also offers an integrated humanities GCSE course. Full comments on geography, history and sociology follow because these subjects were inspected in depth whilst law and humanities were sampled. One lesson of law was observed. The following comments on the teaching of integrated humanities result from the observation of a small sample of lessons in Years 10 and 11.
- 175 The teaching in humanities GCSE is good, with some very good features. Teachers have clear knowledge of the subject matter and good awareness of the factors and issues at the heart of the GCSE requirements. A good variety of resources and a wide range of activities are features of the lessons. Teaching strategies are shared across the faculty and this ensures that students are offered a coherent experience. Teachers share the aims and objectives of the lessons clearly with students. In law, teaching makes a good contribution to students' moral and social development. For example, in a Year 10 lesson, students learned about jury service and this promoted their understanding of their future duties and responsibilities as citizens.
- 176 Students respond well in the lessons. They remain on task throughout. They enjoy the course. There is good teacher management of students' behaviour, together with good support for students with special educational needs.
- 177 Attainment in this integrated course in Years 10 and 11 is broadly in line with that expected in geography and history.

GEOGRAPHY

Overall, the quality of provision in geography is good.

Strengths

- Management, organisation and planning are good.
- Teaching and learning are good.
- The department is well resourced and uses resources effectively.
- Courses are well planned, develop geographical skills well and provide fieldwork opportunities.
- Good support is provided for students with special educational needs and for the development of literacy.

Areas for improvement

- Greater challenge for more-able students, especially boys.
- Feedback to students, and the use of assessment information to plan future learning

- 178 Results over the last three years have been broadly in line with the national average but showed a dip in 2001. In 2002, GCSE examinations results were in line with the national average with 55 per cent of students gaining grades A*-C. More and most able students, however, underachieve in examinations, particularly boys who performed well below the national average at grades A* and A and less well overall in geography than in their other subjects.
- 179 Current students develop skills and gain a sound knowledge of a range of topics. For example, work on coastlines in Year 10 is used to develop empathy and geographical decision-making skills involving group discussion. A Year 11 case study on Mount St Helena provides students with a good understanding of events before, during and after a volcanic eruption. A strong emphasis on the development of literacy skills gives students an awareness of geographical terms and phrases that is above that normally seen. Coursework produced by students allows them to show what they know and can do, giving them scope to demonstrate skills of data collection, data handling, analysis and extended writing. In a river study, more-able students use and interpret Spearman's rank correlation and measurements of hydraulic radius very effectively as well as a wide range of graphs.
- 180 Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers are knowledgeable and make very effective use of interactive boards in the classroom. Teaching ranges from satisfactory to very good. Lessons have clear objectives which are well understood by students. In a lesson on an earthquake, very good lesson structure provided a variety of tasks to cater for students with different preferred learning styles. Appropriate support materials were available for students with special needs, and extension work provided challenge for more-able students and made them think. The lesson had good pace and ended with a plenary session in which most students made a relevant contribution. The impact of this was that students responded very well, kept on task throughout and demonstrated a growing understanding of the causes and effects of earthquakes. More-able students recognised the interaction of human and physical factors in the effects of the earthquake. Where lessons were no better than satisfactory, for example in a lesson bringing together the development of map-reading skills and work on coasts, extension work for more-able students was not sufficiently challenging, and pace for learning was too slow. Teachers generally mark students' work carefully and provide comments to help students improve, but marking for some classes is less thorough and offers limited constructive feedback.

- 181 Relationships with students are generally good and the attitude of students in lessons is good. In most groups there are considerably more boys than girls but, when the work is suitably demanding, all students work hard and make good progress. A very good example of students engaging fully in work was seen in a decision-making exercise on coastal defences where there was enthusiastic, focused and high-level discussion between members of a group of able boys. When lessons have a slower pace or make lower demands, students work passively but generally listen well to teachers and are never disruptive.
- 182 Leadership and management of the subject are good overall. Organisation and planning are strengths. Good use is made of resources and information technology is increasingly being used in both teaching and learning. There is a consistency in the way that all members of the department record objectives at the start of each lesson and use wall-display to build geographical vocabulary. However, the use of homework and the use of assessment and marking to help students learn are inconsistent.
- 183 Progress since the previous inspection has been satisfactory. The department has built on its good start in the use of information and communications technology skills to aid students' learning and has improved liaison with feeder schools to ensure better continuity and progression. Many of the strengths from the previous inspection remain as strengths. However, the finding in the previous inspection that challenging work to stretch more-able students is not provided often enough remains a weakness.

HISTORY

Overall, the quality of provision in history is good.

Strengths

- Teaching and learning are good.
- Students make good progress.
- Relationships are very positive, helping to raise students' achievement.
- The department is well led and managed.
- The subject is popular, with an increasing numbers of students opting to study history.

Areas for improvement

- Greater use of assessment information to agree targets with individual students.
- Developing strategies to encourage the more and most able students.
- Structuring the contribution of the subject to students' moral and cultural development and to their citizenship education.

- 184 GCSE results are in line with the national average. Results in 2001 were higher than in 2002 but performance has fluctuated in recent years. In 2002, there was no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls, although there had been in earlier years. The number of students taking the GCSE course has increased greatly since the previous inspection and it is to the department's credit that standards have been maintained in line with standards achieved nationally.
- 185 Current students develop considerable skills in the evaluation of primary sources. In a Year 11 history of medicine lesson on Edward Jenner and the development of

vaccination for smallpox, for example, students evaluated visual evidence – an early 19th century cartoon – and drew conclusions about its persuasive power as a piece of propaganda. This enabled them to reach above average standards for their age and also to understand the effects of propaganda on public opinion. In the earlier part of the GCSE course, in Year 10, regular use of writing frames and an emphasis on the learning of key words is helping to raise standards for all students. This helps them to become familiar with the skills required for the writing of extended essays that can give both sides of an argument. In a Year 10 lesson, for example, students used writing frames to examine whether “the American Dream” in the 1920s matched reality or not. The good preparation for the demands of the end-of-course examination has a positive impact for students on the Grade C/Grade D borderline. Students with special needs are clearly identified in the subject. They make good progress in relation to prior attainment because, when they are available, learning support assistants are well deployed.

- 186 The quality of teaching and learning is good. In the lessons observed, some teaching was excellent. Teachers have a very good knowledge of their subject, plan meticulously, use lesson time well and set clear learning objectives. This enables students to increase the range and depth of their knowledge and understanding. Teachers choose a good variety of stimulating resources that are carefully linked to regular changes in classroom activities within lessons. In a Year 10 lesson on the Ku Klux Klan and lynching, for example, groups of students analysed how a lynching affected the citizens of a small town because the teacher presented them with a variety of sources of evidence from a contemporary photograph to a short excerpt from a recent film. In a Year 11 lesson revising the history of medicine, students formed a “living time line” that made clear the concepts of progress and regress before moving on to clearly structured worksheets which asked them to analyse changes in medicine from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries. In most lessons, students are stimulated to learn by well-paced teaching that presents them with an element of challenge. This helps to extend the range and depth of their higher order historical skills. Overall, however, strategies for encouraging more and most able students are at an early stage of development.
- 187 A key factor contributing to students’ progress in history is the positive relationship between teachers and students that ensures that all students are fully included in the learning process. Good relationships in the classroom are a strength of the subject. Students have a positive attitude towards their work. They are keen to engage in oral discussion and in writing activities. They care about their work and they present it well. Enjoyment of the challenges they are set by their teachers leads to increased self-confidence.
- 188 Students’ exercise books and folders are marked thoroughly and regularly. Teachers’ mark books show well-kept records. They share the criteria for marking with the pupils. Students have targets for their final examination grade which they note in their planners, but teachers do not spend sufficient time negotiating these, or shorter-term targets, with individual students. There are some procedures in place that form a good basis for developing this. A subject literacy strategy is used effectively; it includes use of writing frames and a structured approach to the reading of texts (annotating them with highlighter pens, for example). Few examples of any numeracy strategy were seen. Some progress has been made in the use of ICT. Year 10 students, for example, make class presentations using PowerPoint. Restricted access to computer facilities, however, limits the opportunities for the further development of ICT skills in history. This is an area that the department is keen to address.

- 189 Management and leadership are good. The subject leader has a clear view of the priorities for history. She is committed to the further improvement of standards, particularly for the more and most able. Schemes of work are thorough and followed by all teachers. Learning support assistants are well managed and are well briefed on lesson topics. The department is efficient. There is no study of local history in the department's schemes of work. British history is confined to a part of the history of medicine. There is considerable emphasis on the nineteenth- and twentieth-century history of the United States. The contribution of history to the development of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is not explicitly developed in the department. However, there are some examples such as the study of cultural factors in different societies – for example, Native Americans in the American West – and consideration of right and wrong in many lessons makes a strong contribution to personal development. Similarly, discussion on rights and freedoms in a democracy in Year 10 lessons is a feature of citizenship education.
- 190 The suite of rooms used by the department is suited to the demands of the subject. Permanently installed television equipment makes it straightforward for students to see short video clips. Resources are carefully managed, but further progress is dependent on the allocation of more resources for the increasing numbers following the GCSE course. The history section in the Information Centre is underresourced.
- 191 The department has made good improvement since the previous inspection. Standards have been maintained while greatly increased numbers have opted for the subject. The issues that arose in 1997, such as poor behaviour from a number of boys, gossip among students and insufficiently clear teacher expectations, have been addressed. During the present inspection, students' behaviour was good and teachers' expectations explicit.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

The quality of provision in discrete information and communication technology is good.

Strengths

- Students' motivation, attitudes and behaviour are very good.
- Student's endeavour and perseverance with coursework.
- Consistently good or very good teaching.
- Good support documentation provided for students.
- Students with special educational needs are fully integrated into all lessons.
- Good feedback is provided to students.

Areas for improvement

- Assessment practice across the subject.
- Record and report students' ICT capability in all subjects.
- Review schemes of work in the light of national developments.

- 192 Results are in line with the national average and results at GCSE A*-C grades range from 51 per cent in 2000, 60 per cent in 2001, to 57 per cent in 2002. At A* grade, boys and girls both achieve above the national average.
- 193 For current students standards have improved and are above those normally seen. Students enter Year 10 with inconsistent skills, work hard, make good progress and achieve well by the age of sixteen. In Year 10, students undertake a set assignment

which is a component of their examination work. As part of their garden centre improvement task, they interrogate a database and produce a plant query based on plant height, width and light requirements. They also produce a report to explain how they design, implement, test and evaluate the system. All students work consistently well. They are supported with clear documentation and analyse the task carefully in order to find the data needed to produce the information required. Special needs students are supported well, appropriately challenged and make good progress. When producing a recording sheet for a school sports day, Year 11 students understand the design of forms, queries, reports and macros, as well as the need to select the correct software for the task. They are taught how to obtain extra examination marks in order to achieve higher grades. From their answers to questions they demonstrate a good understanding of the task requirements and have been prepared well for the examination. All are very attentive and concentrate well. Special needs students are fully integrated into learning and achieve equally well, sometimes above expectations. Boys and girls achieve equally and assessment data show good progression with coursework across the age group. Folios are of a high standard.

- 194 Across subjects, students develop and use their ICT skills well, as, for example, in media studies when they create their own ideas for films for a target audience. They make excellent use of images for advertising poster designs and enhance and exaggerate images for maximum impact and effect. Folios are of excellent quality and students are supported by a technician with expert knowledge. Whilst several subjects use information and communication technology appropriately to enhance teaching and learning, its use is underdeveloped in English, maths and science.
- 195 Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is good, including examples seen in lessons across the curriculum. This reflects teachers' very good subject knowledge, good planning and confident delivery skills. Lessons begin with good introductions, using projectors and interactive white boards where available. Sufficient time is allocated to practical tasks, and the majority of lessons end with clear evaluations. Better lessons include quick-fire questions and answers to test learning. Key words and good exemplar materials are displayed well in classrooms and aid learning. Coursework is marked well, with assessment methods being developed to improve individual feedback to students. Quality support materials are produced to aid learning and these also provide strategies to counter technical systems problems. All students are fully included, make good progress and are monitored well in lessons. However, there are insufficient computers for all students in discrete ICT lessons; this results in students having to work on other tasks whilst waiting for a computer, thus impeding progress. Some lessons across the curriculum do not include appropriate support task materials, with a consequent loss of direction and purpose. A very good web address catalogue is kept in the Information Centre and the Intranet continues to be developed in several subjects.
- 196 Students are keen to learn and they enjoy their lessons. They listen well, answer questions confidently and have mature attitudes to learning. They concentrate and remain on task throughout lessons. Students put considerable effort into their coursework projects and are determined to achieve well.
- 197 The department is very well led and managed. Documentation is of high quality. A six-year development plan for discrete and cross-curricular ICT is moving the subject forward. The development plan is detailed and the development of cross-curricular ICT has been carefully thought through. Documentation includes a curriculum map, skills audit and subject ICT schemes. Assessment of ICT across subjects and

reporting progress to parents are aspects to improve. Examination analysis is very detailed, with targets for improvement. A raising achievement audit is improving results. All of these strategies are leading to higher standards. New staff are supported well and the department has strong links with senior management. The subject is supported well by a knowledgeable network manager and two technicians. The department has good university training links.

- 198 There has been good improvement since the previous inspection. Old computers have been replaced, monitoring of the quality of teaching is taking place and many of the weaknesses identified in the delivery of cross-curricular ICT have been addressed with the introduction of the new programme. However, some departments still need to carry out their commitments. The behaviour of boys has improved considerably and is now good.

MEDIA STUDIES

Overall, the quality of provision in media studies is very good.

Strengths

- Very good results at GCSE, with excellent A*-G passes and rising trend at A*-C, including significant increase of grades A* and A over last three years.
- The enthusiasm and expertise of the media staff, with excellent leadership and management from the head of department.
- Excellent part-time technician support.
- Very good commitment of the students to the course.
- Good quality general resources provision, particularly the new computerised editing facility.

Areas for improvement

- The level of hardware provision is barely adequate, particularly with the increasing numbers of students opting for media.

- 199 Results at GCSE are very good, with significant increases over the last two years at A* to C grades which improved from 64.6 per cent in 2001 to 78 per cent in 2002. Similarly, the number of A* and A grades has increased over the same period from 21.5 per cent to 30.9 per cent, with an increase in A* grades from 3.9 per cent to 10.8 per cent. A-G passes are being maintained at 100 per cent or occasionally just under. Students consistently achieve above predicted grades and above the national average. The media studies course provides a very secure foundation for those students going on to study film studies in the sixth form.

- 200 Media studies attracts high numbers of students, with numbers increasing year on year. Groups have a wide spread of ability, leading to some real successes with the non-academic students. There is a good balance of boys and girls electing for the course. Girls perform slightly better than boys in examinations but the margin is not significant. The more and most able achieve well, finding scope to excel through independent learning. This is seen well in the animation work where students give time and patience to producing very competent animated shorts. The course work is rated very good in all examiners' reports. In the scrutiny of the work seen in class and in the sample of folders provided by the college, written work is extended and detailed, and generally has a high quality of presentation. Technical concepts and vocabulary are used with fluency. ICT is used extensively for word processing, development of graphics and layout. Practical video work is a very good feature of the department's

work, and the investment in high quality, computerised, editing hardware is ensuring that productions are of high value and that the ICT capability of the students is developed well. In this, they are aided by excellent technician support, which has been responsible for training both staff and students on the new system. Speaking and listening skills are effectively developed through the emphasis on collaborative group work.

- 201 The quality of teaching is high. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and understanding, and those who are not specialists are keen to learn how to develop their media skills effectively. This gives lessons pace and rigour, with teachers able to apply theory confidently to media analysis. Teachers have a high level of commitment and enthusiasm for the subject and this engenders the same response in the students, contributing significantly to the good results achieved at the end of the course. Schemes of work are well thought out, with challenging activities and rigorous assessment. Teachers use a wide range of teaching methods: group work, research, independent practical work, and effective use is made of ICT to a high level. Teachers' responses to students' work, through written comments and verbal feedback, are of excellent quality; they are significant factors in the progress made by students. Lessons start appropriately with a brief sharing of objectives and often good starter activities focusing on skills. For example, in the Year 10 lesson on storyboarding, students were given a quick test on eight types of camera shots, which helped them add variation and interest in their story-board work. The extra-curricular experiences for students in media studies and film studies broaden provision beyond the classroom. Generally good resources are available to students, however, the Information Centre provision of reference books is scarcely adequate for the growing number of students. Similarly, the addition of the new computerised editing suite and digital cameras shows good investment in modern technology, but, with the increase in students opting for media courses, it is only just meeting the demand.
- 202 Students are very positive about having opted to do media studies. There are excellent working relationships between staff and students, with the latter confirming their enthusiasm in discussions and through their willingness to invest a great deal of their own time in producing work of a very good standard. Many express enthusiasm for the practical video work and enjoy the amount of independence required. Teachers also want students to do well and have high expectations. This level of enthusiasm and interest, coupled with the expectations of staff, creates a very effective ethos for learning; students strive to achieve well. The close links with film studies means that the teachers make good use of their film knowledge and resources in media studies lessons to increase interest and enjoyment. This was shown well in a Year 11 class where the study of parody made excellent use of clips from films such as 'Blazing Saddles', 'Robin Hood – Men In Tights' and 'Love At First Bite'.
- 203 Leadership and management of the department are excellent features and reflect the head of department's enthusiasm and passion for media and film studies. There is, as a consequence, a firm team commitment to enfranchising students to cope with a media-rich world. The leadership also has considerable examination experience and expertise, which means that the department and students prepare very effectively for the examinations at the end of Year 11. The department has the part-time use of an excellent technician who has considerable expertise with media equipment. His involvement is acknowledged to be invaluable by the teaching team and the students. Not only does he service the hardware but also trains staff and students in its use. With the growth in popularity of media and film studies the question arises as to whether the current allocation of time is sufficient. Overall, provision is very good;

however, the 50 minute lesson is tight for this kind of subject and, whilst very efficient, the part-time technician has only a very limited number of hours available to support the subject.

- 204 In the previous report comment was made of high standards. These have been maintained and, in the last two years, significantly improved.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Overall, the quality of provision in modern foreign languages is unsatisfactory.

Strengths

- Teachers have good subject knowledge.
- Students can choose from three languages.
- There are some effective strategies in teaching, leading to good progress in these lessons.

Areas for improvement

- Too many students underachieve.
- Leadership and management have not identified and acted sufficiently on shortcomings in the department.
- Some teaching lacks clarity and there is not enough interest and variety in learning.
- Pupils do not speak the language routinely in class.
- Day-to-day assessment is not used to guide students towards targets and show them how to improve.

- 205 The standards attained by students in modern foreign languages are below the norm. In French, results at A* to C grade at GCSE in 2002 were below the national average and there has been a downward trend in recent years. However, a higher-than-average proportion of students takes GCSE, and results at A to G grades have been in line with the national average. Students do less well in French than in other subjects in the school. Boys' attainment is lower than girls', as it is nationally. The small number of more-able students who take German as a second language gain above-average results but below their grades in other subjects. The beginners' group who drop French and start German in Year 10 do not enter for GCSE but successfully complete the Certificate of Achievement. The beginners who choose Spanish instead of French in Year 10 gain below-average GCSE results but in less time than is usual.

- 206 Overall, standards of current students in French are below expectation. More-able students have good understanding and speak with confidence, for example in set role plays about lost property. They use a good range of tenses. Average attainers have a less secure grasp of language structures and are not consistently accurate or fluent in speaking and writing. Lower attainers need much help to produce a basic phrase, such as explaining what objects they have lost and giving simple descriptions. Most students respond reasonably well to set questions but they lack the confidence to speak or write unaided. In the more able German groups, students show good understanding of listening and reading passages and have a good knowledge of grammar structures but lack fluency in speaking. The beginners do not have a wide vocabulary but are prepared to speak out and communicate in the language. In Spanish, there is a wide range of ability. The most able gain a good grasp of the language, master the tenses and have a reasonable range of vocabulary. The middle and lower attainers have good understanding but are less secure in speaking and writing.

- 207 Attainment in French is broadly average when they enter the college in Year 10, but it is below average by the age of 16. This reflects significant underachievement. In some lessons, students make steady progress and occasionally it is good. Here, students respond well to the teachers, apply themselves diligently and learn well. However, too many students make insufficient progress, either in particular lessons or over time, so they are not achieving their potential. Learning is not consolidated in a way that builds students' confidence to use and re-use the language they have learned in previous lessons. Progress has also been affected by recent staffing difficulties which have affected continuity of teaching and students' motivation, while teachers have been stretched to cover and support across the department. Some efforts are made to challenge the more and most able, for example writing diaries, but this is not systematic across the department. Students with special educational needs make steady progress and are generally well supported by skilful teaching assistants who help to keep them on task. Progress in German and Spanish is generally steady.
- 208 Teaching and learning are unsatisfactory overall. In Spanish, teaching is at least satisfactory and often good. In German, teaching is sound. There are good features but also occasional shortcomings which slow progress. In French, teaching is unsatisfactory because, although some lessons are good, there are significant weaknesses. In the good lessons, the teachers manage students' behaviour skilfully, ensuring that relationships are positive and that students behave acceptably. Teachers have good subject knowledge. The one non-specialist makes up for any limitations in French knowledge with other strengths, such as excellent behaviour management and good use of ICT skills. Teachers generally organise activities well to cover a good range of language skills. In the best lessons there is good variety. For example, in a Year 10 German lesson, where students had to take part, coming up to the board, using mini-whiteboards and practising speaking in pairs. This created a sense of purpose, interest and respect. The students were keen to join in and learned well. In some lessons, computers are used effectively, for example in a Year 10 French lesson, to illustrate different types of film with extracts from the Internet. Year 10 students prepared their own presentations about Spanish festivals, which led to high interest and involvement. However, these good features of teaching are not consistently found. In general, teachers do not spell out clearly enough exactly what they expect students to achieve and check to make sure they have understood and achieved it. Tasks are often appropriate but because the students do not know what the purpose is, they do not make best use of the time. Where teaching is unsatisfactory, activities are not interesting or varied enough to engage the students actively in the learning, particularly those who do not show any interest in learning a language. Teachers do not always insist that all students listen in silence before they speak. Teachers do not plan carefully enough to build up students' ability to speak routinely more than set answers, with confidence and without support. Marking is inadequate: there are too many gaps and too few comments to guide students on how to improve. These factors slow progress because students are not actively involved; they do not have sharp enough targets to aim for and are not clear enough about how to improve.
- 209 Students show positive attitudes to language learning in many lessons. They are keen to do well, willing to learn and respond very well to the occasional opportunities to take an active part in the learning. Relationships are generally good but, in a significant number of lessons, motivation is low. Students are either merely compliant and do the minimum required or show their reluctance openly, losing concentration and distracting others.

- 210 The college provides a choice of Spanish or German to students who do not wish to continue learning French after leaving their contributory high schools. They appreciate this fresh start but there is not sufficient time for them to achieve reasonable grades at GCSE. Few students study a second foreign language. The department has begun to make effective use of computers to enhance students' learning, particularly for students to produce their own presentations. Students improve their cultural understanding and language through the work of the French assistant, and the German exchange benefits the students who take part. Assessment information has been used to identify some appropriate action but it is not used as a day-to-day tool to help students to do better. Some classrooms are too small for large groups and the noise from the heating and ventilation makes aural work difficult.
- 211 The department faces considerable challenges but there is a tendency to see obstacles, rather than look for ways to move forward; for example how to motivate students more. Some action has been taken but the leadership and management of modern foreign languages at the college has not been effective in bringing about improvement. Monitoring takes place but not all the key issues have been identified, and action to deal with those identified has not been sufficiently followed up to ensure improvement, for example, to help teachers to embrace more recent developments in teaching and learning styles. Assessment procedures are in place but they do not lead to the tracking of students' progress being linked to clear targets for groups and individual students. Some good practice was observed during the inspection. However, not enough has been done to ensure that this leads to consistently good teaching across the department.
- 212 Since the previous inspection, the department has faced the challenge of offering a foreign language to almost all students. Despite the development of some good practice, as in the use of computers, the college has not achieved a successful programme to engage real commitment from students. Plans are in place to move away from providing a language for all students towards a system based on students' choice.

MUSIC

Overall, the quality of provision in music is satisfactory, with strengths in the development and provision of extra-curricular activities.

This subject was not inspected in depth in the sixth form. However, some post 16 lessons were observed and A level results were analysed. Comments for provision in the sixth form have been added in this section.

Strengths

- The department is a hub of activity; it provides a good range of extra-curricular activities and makes a strong impact on the life of the college.
- Relationships are very positive and classroom management is very good.
- There is consistent use of lesson objectives and key vocabulary for the week.
- Students' attitudes, concentration and response are excellent.

Areas for improvement

- Schemes of work for all year groups so that they take account fully of specifications and ensure that students have a clear understanding of what is required for examinations and how to improve their work.
- The use of a wider range of teaching strategies to meet the needs of all learners, including the most able.
- Improve the achievement of the most able students in examination results and increase all student's performance at AS and A level to match more closely their prior attainment.
- Develop the use of ICT in order to broaden the range and quality of learning.

213 AS and A-level results are average compared with national results. Very small numbers of students have taken A-level and AS examinations in the last three years and this makes comparisons with the national average statistically unreliable. Students starting these courses have, on average, achieved a relatively high GCSE point score, and data information show that their subsequent post-16 achievement has been about half a grade lower than might be expected.

214 In the 2002 GCSE examination 83 per cent of students achieved a grade of A* - C. This was above the national average of 67 per cent. No students achieved an A*. Examination results have varied over the three-year period between 2000 and 2002 but overall have been above average, with relatively few students achieving the highest grade. Data for this group of students show that they have broadly achieved what would be expected given their prior experience and skills. The most able students have underachieved in examination results. Students do not perform equally well in all components of the examination, and their knowledge and understanding of music lags behind their performance skills.

215 Current Year 13 students have good performance skills and a sound understanding of the areas of study. Their work is not well organised and does not show sufficient improvement over time. For example, two-part exercises are not reworked with clear insight into improvement. Information on most aspects of the course is written down too haphazardly and students are not writing in sufficient depth and detail. The same picture is found in the work of Year 12 students although, overall, their work is more consistently of a better quality.

216 Year 11 students have good performing skills and are starting to develop some effective compositions. In some aspects of their work they have a sound understanding. For example, they are quite clear about some of the key features and structure of a waltz and some students apply this effectively to their compositions. They are behind schedule for completing coursework to a sufficiently high quality and, although they are clear about some aspects of the course, have not yet started their composition brief, have a limited understanding of area of study two and a superficial knowledge of salsa and minimalism. At the time of the inspection they had a significant amount of catching up to do in order to complete their work to a standard that would do them justice.

- 217 Teaching is sound in all year groups. Subject knowledge is sound and positive relationships are developed and maintained with students. Classroom management is a strength. Planning is a relative weakness and, although students cover the majority of the coursework thoroughly, too little information is recorded or evaluated in a systematic way. The range of teaching strategies is too limited and relies heavily on the students being able to capture sufficiently a series of spoken instructions and information. This leads to some lack of depth and understanding in their work. Some students cope with this approach and do reasonably well. In a Year 10 lesson students worked together well on a joint composition task of putting together a song with a verse, chorus and bridge. This was an effective approach, and the outcome of the work was good. The teaching here was good but could have been improved further by a more systematic approach to the learning and clearer understanding about the knowledge and skills developed by the students during the process.
- 218 Learning is sound in all year groups. Students make steady progress and the large majority of GCSE candidates achieve the potential shown by their prior attainment. The most able GCSE students underachieve, and AS and A-level students do not make sufficient progress in some aspect of their work. Students concentrate well and work independently. Many have a sound understanding of areas of study but they are not sufficiently well organised in their learning and have not got a clear enough picture of examination requirements, the level of work they need to achieve or which areas of their work they need to improve. The work they have in folders does not provide a suitable resource for revision since it is not set out in a clear way and is often of insufficient depth. GCSE students have too much work that needs to be completed at the final stages of their course.
- 219 All students observed during the inspection had a very positive attitude to learning. They wanted to do well and improve their work. Their concentration and commitment are excellent.
- 220 Leadership in the department is dynamic and has made a strong impact on the department and its role within the life of the school. There is good engagement with students who have instrumental lessons and the department provides an effective focal point for their work. Further development is needed in planning schemes of work, developing a range of teaching strategies and enabling all students to learn to their potential. This needs to be reflected in the subject development plan which is effectively written but does not include sufficient of the right development priorities. The department has good accommodation but lacks sufficient ICT resources and the pianos are all in the later stages of wear and tear.
- 221 The previous inspection report did not suggest any specific areas for improvement. The capacity for further improvement is good.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Very good leadership and management which provides a clear vision for the subject and promotes high standards.
- Committed teachers with good subject knowledge.
- Consistently high GCSE results.
- Very good relationships between staff and students.
- A wide range of facilities and resources that have a positive effect on the students' enjoyment of the subject and the standards they achieve.

Areas for improvement

- Teaching strategies to challenge the more able students and support students with special educational needs.
- Assessment to meet the requirements of the National Curriculum.

222 GCSE results for 2002 were in line with the national average. This represents a dip in attainment from the previous two years when results were well above average. However, the temporary staffing arrangements in place for the 2002 cohort have now been resolved. Generally, students do better in physical education than they do in their other GCSE subjects. Students from a wide range of abilities, including some with special educational needs, take the GCSE option, reflecting the department's open access policy. All students entered in the past two years gained a grade A* to G. In comparison with the national picture fewer girls take the subject. The school has adopted a range of strategies to redress the imbalance, including the introduction of a girls only group in the current Year 11.

223 Current students achieve above national expectation. A number of more-able students are working well above this level in selected activities. For example, in one Year 10 rugby lesson observed, a high-attaining boy used his excellent technical knowledge to help his partner improve his tackling skills by giving him a succession of very precise coaching points. The Year 11 students taking the Junior Sports Leaders Award co-operate with each other very effectively to plan and organise short circuit-training sessions. They apply accurately their knowledge and understanding of fitness training principles to ensure the circuits have a good balance of exercises for the upper and lower body. Achievement is good, although it varies between the activities. In the heart health and muscle health modules, students make very good progress. They carry out their own warm-ups incorporating a range of stretching exercise for the main muscle groups. Swimmers do as well as can be expected in Year 10. They swim breaststroke and front crawl for sustained distances, although their stroke technique is inconsistent. The national Swimfit awards are used very effectively to motivate the students.

224 The standard of GCSE theory work is generally good. However, teachers do not always prepare sufficiently for the range of attainment. As a result students with special educational needs experience difficulty with extended writing tasks, and some higher-attaining students are not sufficiently challenged to think for themselves. Most students have a good grasp of the effects of exercise on the body. They understand how to increase the intensity of exercise to make it more demanding for the performer. Most students use technical language consistently and accurately.

- 225 Overall, the quality of teaching is good and students learn well as a result. In many lessons teaching is very good. Teachers foster good relationships, creating a positive ethos for learning and enjoyment. They plan lessons well, carefully selecting practices that are progressive, motivating and promote success. In a Year 10 games lesson, the teacher helped the students to learn how to rugby tackle safely by leading them through a series of progressively more complex practices. In both practical and theory lessons teachers use a variety of resources to promote students' interest and enhance their learning, including the use of ICT. In one GCSE PE lesson observed, the PowerPoint programme was used effectively to summarise key revision points on the skeleton. The kayak proficiency test enables students to take responsibility for their own learning, set their own targets and evaluate their personal achievements.
- 226 Attitudes and behaviour are very good. Students have a responsible attitude to work and are enthusiastic about physical education. They appreciate the range of activities that the college provides. Students are eager to learn. They listen carefully to the teachers' explanations and are not afraid to ask questions to clarify their understanding and advance their learning. They work hard in lessons to improve their own standard of performance and respond well to the opportunities teachers give them to take responsibility for their own learning.
- 227 The department is very well led and managed. The head of department has a clear vision for the development of the subject, which has contributed much to the college's successful designation as a sports college. He promotes good standards of teaching through a structured programme of monitoring, evaluation and support. Procedures for assessing and monitoring students' attainment and progress in GCSE PE are good. Students know how well they are doing and what they must do to improve. In core PE lessons there is good assessment and reporting of students' personal qualities and attitudes. However, assessment of the four strands of the National Curriculum is underdeveloped.
- 228 Staff resources and learning resources are maximised. A PE technician is successfully deployed, adding to the overall effectiveness of the department. Accommodation is very good. It makes possible the provision of a curriculum relevant to the needs of students and encouraging lifelong involvement in physical activity.
- 229 Since the previous inspection good progress has been made in all areas for development. Now, lesson objectives are established at the start of each lesson, are explained fully and reviewed at the end of the lesson. ICT is being used to aid learning. Teaching is monitored well.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Overall, the quality of provision in religious education is poor.

Strengths

- Some subjects have identified units of work to enable the delivery of religious education.

Areas for improvement

- Raise standards by co-ordinating the subject to ensure delivery of the Leicestershire Agreed Syllabus.
- Put systems in place which evaluate progress towards delivery of the Leicestershire Agreed Syllabus.
- Report annually to parents on students' progress.

230 Overall, the quality of provision for religious education (RE) is poor. There is no examination syllabus offered for religious education in Years 10 and 11. In November 2000, the governors took the strategic decision that RE should be taught across the curriculum. A mapping exercise has been completed which identifies where, within the faculties' schemes of work, RE should be delivered. During inspection week no evidence was observed of this taking place, although there were examples to be found in design of some satisfactory work on symbolism which had been covered earlier in the year.

231 Limited attempt has been made to cross-reference the results of the curriculum mapping exercise to the requirements of the Leicestershire Agreed Syllabus. There are no schemes of work. Although there is evidence from minutes of meetings that governors intend to monitor the delivery of RE there is no recorded evidence that they have done so. No subject reports are written to parents and no resources are allocated to the teaching and learning of the subject. No member of staff has responsibility on a day-to-day basis for the co-ordination of the subject.

232 Within two of the post-16 general studies units, elements of the Agreed Syllabus are delivered. However, because these are dealt with in an examination context other than religious studies, they do not contain the subject content required. As in Years 10 and 11, there is no monitoring, evaluating or reporting. Conversations with students demonstrate rudimentary knowledge of world religions and an absence of either consolidation or additional learning since joining the college.

233 Statutory requirements for the delivery and reporting of the subject in Years 10 and 11 and post-16 are not being met. Progress since the previous inspection has been very poor, although the college management recognises the weaknesses and wishes to address them.

SOCIOLOGY

The overall provision for sociology is very good.

Strengths

- Teachers have a very good knowledge and understanding of the subject and use a good range of teaching methods.
- Students achieved very good GCSE examination results in 2002, the first year of examination.
- Students' attitude to their work is very positive.
- Sociology makes a very good contribution to the development of students' social, moral, and cultural development.
- The use of assessment information and analysis of students' examination performance is used well to inform teaching.

Areas for improvement

- Provide opportunities for the subject co-ordinator to monitor and evaluate teaching in order to share examples of good practice across the subject.

234 Results in the 2002 GCSE examination, the first year in which the subject was examined, were well above the national average. Nearly three quarters of the students entered were girls: although they achieved slightly better than boys, this was not significant. On average, students achieved better in sociology than they did in their other subjects.

235 Current students' work is slightly above that to be expected nationally. Students engage well in class discussion and are developing a good knowledge of the sociology of crime, education and poverty, the areas of the syllabus they are currently studying. Many respond well to teachers' questioning and often draw on previous knowledge to show they have made good progress in their knowledge and understanding of the subject. For example, in a Year 10 class focusing on crime and deviancy, students offered reason why certain ethnic, gender and age groups have higher levels of recorded crime. Many students also distinguish between the facts and the public perception about which groups are more likely to be victims and perpetrators of crime.

236 Teaching is very good and students learn well as a result. Teachers have very good subject knowledge both to promote students' understanding of the work as well as build their self-confidence. Students with special educational needs are well supported by the class teacher in an unobtrusive way that enables them to make good progress. Teachers' planning is another strength. Lessons are often taught at a good pace with a variety of activities that hold students' attention and enable them to draw on their own experiences. This is particularly effective in enabling students to understand and apply difficult sociological concepts. For example, in a Year 11 lesson looking at the impact of the welfare state on poverty in Britain, most students drew on their own experiences to identify the benefits and shortcomings of the various elements of the welfare state in alleviating poverty.

237 Students have a positive attitude to sociology. Their behaviour and levels of concentration are generally good. They respond well to the different styles of teaching they experience and collaborate well when working in pairs or small groups. Students respond well to the opportunities the subject provides to develop their social, moral, and cultural understanding. For example, in the same Year 11 lesson on the impact of the welfare state on poverty in Britain, students worked well in small groups in

discussing, in a balanced way, the causes of poverty and the impact of the welfare state.

- 238 Leadership and management of the subject are very good. Subject documentation is good and there has been some good work in analysing examination performance and developing schemes of work to meet the recent changing demands of the GCSE examinations. The subject co-ordinator and the other teacher of the subject are committed to raising standards further. Although resources are generally adequate, there is a shortage of textbooks, which results in two groups having to share.
- 239 The subject was not taught at the time of the previous inspection. It has been successfully introduced into the curriculum with results well above the national average at the first time of examination in 2002.

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

In the inspection, fifteen 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 2001 and 2002. National comparisons are available for 2001 only. The average point score for AS was published to parents using the new point tariffs in 2001 and in 2002. Comparative national figures on this new system are not available.

GCE AS level courses

| Subject | Number entered | | % gaining grades A-E | | | % gaining grades A-B | | | Average point score | |
|--|----------------|------|----------------------|--------------|--------------|----------------------|--------------|--------------|---------------------|--------------|
| | 2001 | 2002 | College 2001 | College 2002 | England 2001 | College 2001 | College 2002 | England 2001 | College 2001 | College 2002 |
| Mathematics | 43 | 32 | 63 | 72 | 71 | 21 | 28 | 30 | 23.9 | 29.6 |
| Further mathematics | 3 | 0 | 100 | - | - | 0 | - | - | 36.6 | - |
| Biology | 47 | 83 | 87 | 88 | 84 | 29 | 27 | 34 | 32.5 | 33.1 |
| Chemistry | 26 | 35 | 77 | 94 | 87 | 31 | 40 | 40 | 33.8 | 39.1 |
| Physics | 18 | 23 | 78 | 61 | 86 | 28 | 17 | 39 | 30.5 | 22.1 |
| Design and technology (product design) | 13 | 14 | 54 | 64 | 86 | 8 | 0 | 32 | 15.3 | 20.7 |
| Business studies | 29 | 23 | 86 | 91 | 89 | 27 | 30 | 31 | 33.7 | 36.9 |
| ICT | 36 | 32 | 72 | 63 | 81 | 14 | 19 | 22 | 25.2 | 20.9 |
| Sports/Physical education studies | 26 | 20 | 92 | 90 | 88 | 31 | 20 | 25 | 35.0 | 35.5 |
| Art and design | 19 | 16 | 68 | 94 | 88 | 26 | 31 | 43 | 26.3 | 37.5 |
| Music | 2 | 7 | 100 | 86 | 95 | 50 | 0 | 43 | 45.0 | 25.7 |
| Film Studies | 27 | 43 | 100 | 100 | - | 70 | 77 | - | 51.1 | 50.0 |
| Theatre studies | 12 | 17 | 92 | 100 | 95 | 67 | 35 | 40 | 48.3 | 43.5 |
| Geography | 28 | 32 | 86 | 100 | 91 | 32 | 25 | 38 | 34.6 | 37.5 |
| History | 12 | 16 | 100 | 100 | 91 | 58 | 69 | 41 | 45.8 | 49.3 |
| Psychology | 57 | 52 | 86 | 94 | 86 | 37 | 33 | 34 | 36.8 | 37.0 |
| Sociology | 18 | 24 | 72 | 75 | 86 | 17 | 46 | 34 | 25.0 | 34.5 |
| English language | 33 | 19 | 91 | 84 | 93 | 24 | 0 | 35 | 30.0 | 28.4 |
| English Language and literature | 23 | 46 | 96 | 98 | 93 | 35 | 61 | 35 | 40.4 | 45.6 |
| English literature | 35 | 44 | 94 | 100 | 95 | 17 | 25 | 39 | 32.0 | 37.2 |
| French | 7 | 15 | 86 | 53 | 89 | 43 | 0 | 40 | 41.4 | 14.0 |
| German | 0 | 4 | - | 100 | 90 | - | 25 | 39 | - | 32.5 |
| General studies | 150 | 183 | 61 | 74 | - | 5 | 10 | - | 17.8 | 22.6 |

Source: College's published results and 2001 sixth form PANDA report.

GCE A level and AVCE courses

| Subject | Number entered | | % gaining grades A-E | | | % gaining grades A-B | | | Average point score | |
|--|----------------|------|----------------------|-----------------|-----------------|----------------------|-----------------|-----------------|---------------------|-----------------|
| | 2001 | 2002 | College 2001 | College 2002 | England 2001 | College 2001 | College 2002 | England 2001 | College 2001 | England 2001 |
| Mathematics | 32 | 24 | 75 | 96 | 87 | 41 | 42 | 43 | 4.81 | 5.8 |
| Further mathematics | 5 | 3 | 100 | 100 | - | 40 | 67 | - | 6.00 | - |
| Biology | 46 | 33 | 82 | 88 | 88 | 30 | 27 | 34 | 4.48 | 5.3 |
| Chemistry | 12 | 14 | 100 | 100 | 90 | 8 | 57 | 43 | 4.17 | 5.9 |
| Physics | 17 | 10 | 52 | 90 | 88 | 24 | 40 | 40 | 3.53 | 5.7 |
| Design and technology (product design) | 22 | 6 | 100 | 100 | 91 | 41 | 33 | 30 | 6.00 | 5.38 |
| Business studies | 15 | 20 | 100 | 95 | 92 | 40 | 40 | 32 | 6.40 | 5.5 |
| ICT | 17 | 11 | 94 | 95 | 86 | 41 | 36 | 23 | 6.47 | 4.6 |
| Sports/Physical education studies | 13 | 14 | 100 | 100 | 92 | 39 | 36 | 25 | 6.46 | 5.1 |
| Art and design | 22 | 10 | 100 | 90 | 96 | 41 | 30 | 46 | 6.0 | 6.6 |
| Music | 1 | 2 | 100 | 100 | 93 | 0 | 50 | 35 | 6.00 | 5.74 |
| Film studies | 29 | 22 | 100 | 95 | - | 100 | 68 | - | 7.38 | - |
| Theatre studies | 13 | 11 | 84 | 100 | 95 | 31 | 73 | 40 | 5.23 | 3.0 |
| Geography | 26 | 13 | 88 | 100 | 92 | 19 | 38 | 38 | 4.54 | 5.7 |
| History | 13 | 9 | 84 | 100 | 88 | 84 | 44 | 35 | 4.92 | 5.5 |
| Psychology | 28 | 34 | 100 | 100 | 86 | 54 | 35 | 35 | 6.36 | 5.5 |
| Sociology | 18 | 7 | 100 | 100 | 86 | 67 | 29 | 35 | 7.56 | 5.5 |
| English language | 70 | 21 | 100 | 95 | 92 | 24 | 19 | 30 | 5.60 | 5.3 |
| English literature | 41 | 27 | 100 | 93 | 95 | 34 | 26 | 37 | 6.29 | 5.9 |
| English language and literature | 0 | 16 | - | 88 | 93 | - | 50 | 35 | - | - |
| French | 8 | 3 | 70 | 100 | 89 | 38 | 67 | 38 | 6.25 | 5.6 |
| German | 4 | 0 | 100 | - | 91 | 75 | - | 40 | 9.00 | 5.8 |
| General studies | 115 | 57 | 75 | 88 | 85 | 20 | 14 | 23 | 3.90 | 4.9 |
| Health and Social Care AVCE | 4 | 6 | 100 | 50 | - | 75% | 0 | - | - | - |
| Business Advanced GNVQ | 3 | 0 | 33 | - | - | 0 | - | - | - | - |
| Leisure and Tourism advanced GNVQ | 6 | 0 | 100 | - | - | 33% | - | - | - | - |

Source: College's published results and 2001 sixth form PANDA report

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

In mathematics, the inspection covered the A-level and AS-level courses. Students study modules in pure mathematics, methods, statistics and discrete mathematics. In addition the re-sit GCSE mathematics and the application of number leading to the key skills qualification were inspected. In science, biology was inspected, whilst chemistry and physics were sampled.

MATHEMATICS

Overall, the quality of provision in mathematics is good.

Strengths

- Standards of achievement at advanced level are above the national average.
- Students' attitudes are very good.
- Teaching is good.
- Support for students outside lessons is very good.
- The range of courses provided is very good.

Areas for improvement

- The scheme of work is not sufficiently detailed.
- Day-to-day assessment and marking to support students is weak.
- ICT is not sufficiently developed to enhance teaching and learning.

- 240 A-level results have been above the national average in two of the last three years. The AS-level results were in line with the national average in 2001 and improved further in 2002. In GCSE re-sit examinations, approximately one in three students achieved a C grade or better in 2001, but in 2002, this dropped to approximately one in five. In key skills, application of number, four of the ten students passed at Level 1, and six of the twelve students passed at Level 2 in the 2003 January examination.
- 241 Over the last three years A-level results in mathematics have fluctuated, but the overall trend is positive. The take-up of mathematics by female and male students shows an increasing proportion of male students, with no significant difference in the achievement of boys and girls.
- 242 The standard of work for current Year 12 students is, overall, as expected, with some good work seen in students' books. The standard of work for current Year 13 students is above the national expectation, with some students demonstrating work of a very high standard. The range of work is impressive and shows a thorough and detailed coverage of the examination syllabus. The student studying further mathematics showed a clear understanding of eigen values and eigen vectors.
- 243 Students re-sitting their GCSE mathematics course are working at the expected level and find the tangent ratio in a right-angled triangle. Most students use the ratio to find the 'opposite' side. However, many students are unclear about the concept of ratio, and some are unable to use a protractor to measure an angle accurately.
- 244 The application of number key skill is offered to students at level 1 and level 2. In January 2003, four of the ten students entered gained a pass at Level 1, and six of the twelve students entered gained a pass at level 2. Provision is one lesson per week. The teaching of key skills is good. The teacher's balance of questioning and

exposition enabled students to show what they knew and could do, and supported the students well in their learning. The students tackled the research coursework task with enthusiasm. Students use scale and metric units to calculate zones of mobile phone coverage, and tabulate data to compare coverage against cost. Students receive good feedback from the teacher, which enables them to make sound gains in their learning.

- 245 Teaching is good overall in both years. The best teaching is characterised by clearly stated objectives informed by the assessment of students' previous work, clear and confident exposition based on very good knowledge and understanding, good questioning and supplementary questioning to check and deepen understanding, good pace and the encouragement of students to ask searching questions. This was clearly evident in a 'volumes of revolution' lesson in which the teacher, in discussion with the students, had identified an insecure understanding. Through good teaching, students clarified their understanding and consolidated their learning. In some lessons the balance of activities does not allow students sufficient time to work through investigative questions. Too much teacher talk and over-reliance on the textbook result in a slow pace. In a lesson on formulating differential equations, a long exposition by the teacher left students insufficient time to check their understanding, and several students were unable to confidently relate the two variables in a single equation by the end of the lesson. End-of-chapter tests and review sheets are in place but the formal marking of these assessments is not sufficiently related to examination grades. Students' day-to-day work is self-marked. Therefore students are not given enough feedback on how they are answering questions and what they need to do to improve. This particularly impacts on the weaker students.
- 246 Learning is sound in Year12 and good in Year 13. Students' attitudes are very good in all lessons and are a significant factor in gaining high levels of achievement. Students are keen to learn, concentrate well, persevere when concepts are difficult and work hard throughout the lesson. Students' acquisition of skills and knowledge is good, but opportunities to use ICT resources to help modelling and investigation, and opportunities for independent learning, are limited. Students are appreciative of the good support given by the teachers outside formal lesson time.
- 247 Leadership and management are sound; there is clear direction provided to students in the choice of courses. The departmental development plan is in line with developments nationally but lacks focus on the specific needs of the college. Some teachers undertake in-service training provided by the examination board, but wider professional development is rare. Courses are resourced with the relevant textbook. The scheme of work is heavily based on the text and does not identify additional resources, ICT opportunities and alternative teaching and learning strategies.
- 248 Since the previous inspection the department has made sound progress in monitoring teaching and learning. There was no specific report on post-16 mathematics therefore it is not possible to comment in great detail on progress made.

BIOLOGY

Overall, the quality of provision in biology is good.

Strengths

- Results are improving and are slightly above average.
- Teaching overall is good.
- Students' files are well organised.
- Students work well independently.
- Relationships at all levels are very good.

Areas for improvement

- More efficient use of time to ensure progress in lessons is effectively consolidated through plenary activities.
- Reports should be targeted more accurately towards specific aspects of biology as well as students' approaches to the subject.
- Ensuring best teaching practice is effectively shared in the department.

- 249 A-level results in biology improved in 2002 with nearly 90 per cent of students gaining a pass at grades A to E. The average point score per pupil shows an increasing trend over the last three years. Although a small number of students failed to gain a grade, this could be linked to the wide ability range of students allowed entry to the course, some of whom have studied science only to foundation level at GCSE. AS-level results in 2002 were above the results expected in comparison with students' GCSE grades, with students performing better in biology than in other subjects. Results in chemistry follow the national trend. In physics, results have been below average, but at A level they improved in 2002, with 90 per cent of students gaining a pass at grades A-E.
- 250 The standard of work of current students in Year 13 is above that normally seen. Files are well organised and show the full range of the subject specification. Students show good recall of DNA, discussing endonucleotides and their uses in understanding genetic engineering. Coursework assessed practical work was evident and was of an appropriate standard. Little routine practical was evident during the week of the inspection, but students' file work contained a range of practical work of a standard normally expected, and some was better.
- 251 Students in Year 12 show significant progress from GCSE standard and a logical progression. They show understanding of the causes of disease and patterns and trends of infection. Many predict and explain the differences in infection rates across the country.
- 252 Teaching is good overall. However, very good, good and satisfactory teaching was evident. Where teaching was very good, high standards resulted, pace was appropriate and brisk, the lesson well planned so that early parts of the lesson were used as a foundation for later work. Methods of teaching were varied. For example, in a Year 13 lesson concerning genetic engineering, very good subject knowledge and questioning stimulated the students to ask demanding questions. Understanding was reinforced with video extracts, textbook activity and a DNA construction game. Where teaching was only satisfactory, planning sometimes failed to accommodate the differing capabilities of students and learning was not effectively consolidated at the end of lessons.

- 253 Students are provided with subject specification details for each topic. The standard of marking is good. The department makes regular use of registers and personal records for students, recording homework, test marks and interim exam grades. This provides students with clear guidance as to their progress towards target grades they had agreed. Guidance on how to improve further is, however, inconsistent and sometimes vague.
- 254 Students learn well. They are attentive and show a willingness to learn, seeking clarification of their understanding by asking thoughtful questions, for example, about the means and causes of disease transmission. Relationships in the classrooms are good. The atmosphere is academically challenging but friendly and supportive. In Year 12 there was some lack of confidence in offering answers that proved to be correct when given. There is evidence of students' independent work and research, for example the production of leaflets to explain different diseases, their causes and infection rates. Students are encouraged to become more responsible for their own learning, use ICT resources to research topics in more detail and become more efficient and effective learners.
- 255 The overall good standard of teaching and learning is a reflection of the consistency expected by the head of department, appointed in September 2002. Great care is taken to ensure that the subject specifications are fully met and that support materials are available. Subject reports identify positive achievements, areas of concern and targets. These are completed with an emphasis on attitudes to work and effort. There is inconsistent reference to what it is that students do or do not know and what it is they should do to improve. Opportunities are also missed to share the best practice in the department amongst all teachers of biology, to raise standards further and ensure consistent good practice.

ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

The inspection covered the AS and A-level design and technology (Product design) courses.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Leadership and management of the subject by the head of faculty.
- Strategies introduced to raise achievement.
- Students' knowledge and understanding of their attainment and progress.
- Teaching is good.
- Relationships between staff and students.

Areas for improvement

- Further enrich students' experiences of design and technology in society.
- Extend opportunities for students to use computer-aided designing and manufacturing techniques.

- 256 A relatively small number of students have followed the A-level course in design and technology over the last three years but the department has achieved a 100 per cent pass rate over this period. Results have been consistently close to the national average at A and B grades. Fourteen students completed the AS course last year, nine achieving pass grades from C to E. Six of these have moved on to the A2 year.

Thirteen students are currently following the AS course in Year 12 and have recently achieved very good results in the Product Design unit examination, with 46 per cent of the students gaining A and B grades.

- 257 Current students in Year 12 are making good progress and achieving standards that are above expected levels at this stage of the AS course. For example, students have recently completed the Case Study unit in which they research and investigate a system in industrial or commercial practice. These have provided students with a detailed insight into an application of design and technology in society. They have investigated, for example, systems used in restaurants, a watersports activity centre and the environment of railway maintenance. The case studies have involved students undertaking first-hand research on site and completing a full analysis and evaluation of the information collected. Students have used computers effectively to enhance the presentation of their work; for example, using spreadsheets to record the results of questionnaires, and word-processing and desktop publishing software. Currently, these students are completing the Product Design unit, and they analyse a range of products such as toothbrushes and remote controls and suggest ways in which the designs might be improved. They demonstrate a high standard of graphic and modelling skills to communicate their ideas. For example, each student has modelled a product in a wide range of different materials, such as wood, clay and styrofoam, and has then evaluated the advantages and disadvantages of working in each material.
- 258 Current students in Year 13 make good progress towards completing the making and evaluating unit, and are achieving standards that are in line with expectation of the A2 course. They have produced detailed portfolios of their design proposals, well matched to the requirements of the course. They demonstrate thorough research, using both primary and secondary sources, and a good understanding of materials. For example, in textiles, students have experimented with a wide range of constructional and decorative techniques to develop ideas for projects such as a storage cover for a sailing dinghy and a bag made from recycled materials. In the workshop, students work quite independently at this stage of the course and use a variety of hand and machine processes confidently to fabricate, for example, brackets for outdoor seating and to cut out components for a hi-fi storage unit.
- 259 Overall, teaching in the sixth form is good. Teachers demonstrate a secure knowledge and understanding of their material specialisms whilst preparing students for the course units. For example, in Year 12, the teacher demonstrated to the group how to produce a summary sheet of their product modelling by combining digital images of the models with word-processed text to present their results. Teachers provide detailed help and advice on an individual basis; for example, discussing the work completed and helping students prioritise on how to proceed. For each course unit, teachers have prepared a detailed study guide. These provide students with a clear picture of what they are required to do and how the marks are to be allocated. In addition, teachers have introduced an assessment scheme which ensures that students have an on-going record of how well they have achieved in each section of the unit.
- 260 Students enjoy their design and technology courses. They are motivated by the tasks set and work productively throughout lessons. Students on the A2 course particularly enjoy being able to work on a major coursework project of their own choice and the opportunity it has provided for individual creativity.

- 261 The leadership and management of the subject are very good. There is good communication between teachers who, in turn, have developed a very good working relationship with students. Teachers have prepared appropriate activities for each unit of the course to ensure full coverage of the AS and A2 specifications. The faculty improvement plan has identified clear priorities to be addressed to develop the subject within the college. Teachers are aware of the need to extend the use of computer-aided design and manufacture, and suitable machinery and training will shortly be available. Current students need further opportunities to enrich their knowledge and understanding of design and technology beyond the college; for example, through group visits to industry, exhibitions and galleries.
- 262 This subject was not reported specifically at post-16 in the previous inspection.

BUSINESS STUDIES

The inspection focussed on AS and A-level courses in business studies.

Overall, the quality of provision is good.

Strengths

- Students make good progress from related courses studied in Years 10 and 11.
- Good methodology for most lessons that provides an appropriate blend of direct teaching and individual assignments.
- Good monitoring of the progress of individual students.
- The social skills, maturity and personal development of students are good.

Areas for improvement

- Raise attainment at the highest grades in AS/A2 through improved learning activities.
- Develop further students' ability to synthesise data and information and to research and present ideas in innovative ways.

- 263 Standards in business education are good. Over the past two years, A-level results have been above the national average. In 2001, 40 per cent of students gained pass grades at the highest levels and a 100 per cent pass rate overall. The good results were maintained in 2002.
- 264 Standards of current Year 13 students are in line with those normally seen at this stage in their course. There are no significant differences between the standards reached by boys or girls. Standards are being maintained, particularly for the most capable students. They have good knowledge and understanding of the theory, use the correct terminology and demonstrate higher levels of analytical skills.
- 265 Students in Year 12 make good progress and achieve standards expected at this stage of the course. When taking account of their previous attainment in GCSE this represents good progress for many students. The most capable students achieve particularly well in understanding the methodology needed for their course requirements. All students develop a range of relevant terminology which they use effectively. Students have good research skills and use ICT with confidence.
- 266 Overall, the quality of teaching is good, with some satisfactory lessons in Year 12. Teachers display good subject knowledge and this is used well in their questioning, explanations and the structured approach to teaching key ideas. In the lessons observed, when teaching was good, as in a Year 13 lesson on factors affecting the

UK economy, a good framework was provided which enabled students to make good progress. There were good relationships which gave students confidence to ask questions and volunteer ideas. Oral feedback was given at the end of the lesson to reinforce the learning that had taken place. In an effective Year 12 lesson, about the problems faced by business of balancing ethical decisions with making profits, there was a lively debate with a variety of activities covering the skills of listening and speaking. However, in a Year 12 lesson where the teaching was satisfactory, the lesson had been planned well, but there was too much teacher talk, so that students did not have enough active practice or participation in the work to fix their learning. The marking and assessment of students' work is a strength. It is rooted in a secure understanding of the requirements of the examination board. Day-to-day marking is thorough, with many helpful comments to indicate how students can improve their work. Students are given good oral feedback on their progress which is monitored well.

- 267 Overall, learning is good. All students show good levels of interest and concentrate productively on tasks. Relationships are excellent. Students enjoy the work and engage themselves in the activities. They are pleased with their studies and progress. Students treat their peers with warmth and respect; they are mature and conscientious young adults. Their ability to work independently is being developed and most take advantage of the opportunities to use the college's ICT facilities available to them.
- 268 This is a well-managed department. The head of department has set about ensuring clear educational direction. There is a commitment to building on what has already been achieved and to improve standards. The strong sense of purpose and determination ensures that students do well. Effective, regular team meetings cover curricular planning and development, monitoring course delivery, assessment planning and review of students' progress. The department is well placed to make further progress.
- 269 This subject was not reported at the previous inspection.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

AS and A2 computer studies courses and key skills Level 2 course were inspected.

Overall, the quality of provision in information technology is very good.

Strengths

- Results at A level are within the range of the top quarter of schools across the country.
- Students produce high-quality coursework.
- The quality of teaching is consistently very good; teachers have very good subject knowledge.
- Students identify real end-users for project work.

Areas for improvement

- Lower the number of ungraded AS candidates.

- 270 Over recent years, results in A-level computer studies have been well above the national average. A-level results for 2002 show a slight drop, with an 82 per cent pass rate but students did well against their level on entry into the course. At AS level, only 73 per cent achieved pass grades in 2001, with a drop to 65 per cent in 2002. At

AS level, too many students did not achieve highly enough against their GCSE potential.

- 271 Students achieve well and make very good progress. In Year 12, students make good progress with their individual coursework projects. Students identify real end-users, within the local community where possible, and arrange interviews with managers to identify project needs. From detailed questionnaires, students design a system to meet project requirements. At this stage, much work has been completed on implementing the system and testing is now taking place. Students work independently and are given very good feedback as the project progresses. They make good progress and good standards are achieved.
- 272 In Key Skills, students gain an understanding of field names and records within a database. They learn how to use the software to input field names and text, number or currency data types. Students work confidently on their databases and use ICT well to support their work in other subjects. More expert and faster users of ICT work on their coursework which includes importing text and images from the Internet and using the digital camera for leaflet design. In design and technology, students use ICT extensively for the presentation of their case studies, many of which are of professional standard. Digital imaging is also used to record design processes which are then enhanced and imported into design folios. In film and media studies, students use video software to produce excellent quality end products.
- 273 Current Year 13 students are introduced to the need for user guides which explain systems operations to non-technical users. They are taught the essential requirements of a good user guide, including quality of presentation and the use of screen shots. Using this information, they read and analyse a professional publication and criticise confidently and pick out missing features. Students gain new knowledge quickly and apply intellectual skills well. Students also learn the differences between developments in systems. They explain confidently the differences between centralised, dispersed, distributed databases and the use of telecommunications. Coursework files reflect the application of considerable effort and are of very good quality.
- 274 Students work hard and are well motivated. Teaching material is available on the intranet and this aids independent learning. Students are very attentive during lessons and concentrate for long periods. They are very confident and competent users of ICT and they enjoy the demands and challenges of the subject. They have mature attitudes.
- 275 Teaching is always at least satisfactory; in the majority of lessons it is very good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and also commercial experience, both of which are put to good use to reinforce learning. Lessons begin with clear introductions, allow sufficient time for practical work and good endings with appropriate homework set. All students are given very good documentation to aid learning. Coursework checklists are used to ensure specification coverage and teachers give much individual feedback to improve work. Every student has an individual target for every lesson and these are discussed. Teachers plan their lessons well and have very good resource banks of learning materials. Students respond well and produce quality work.
- 276 The subject is managed very well by a very efficient head of department. Documentation is very detailed and of high quality. Very good use is made of data to set targets for students. Students have continued to produce above-average

examination results. New AS and A2 courses have been carefully planned and introduced with success. Students are monitored well, with procedures in place to identify underachievement. Teachers work well together as a team. The department is supported effectively by a network manager and two technicians.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

The inspection focussed on AS and A-level physical education.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Attainment is well above average and has been so for the last three years.
- The teaching of AS and A-level PE is good: lessons are well planned and use material that engages the interest of students.
- The head of department sets high standards, leads by example and provides good support for the less experienced members of the department.
- The relationships between staff and students are very good and promote good learning.

Areas for improvement

- Teaching strategies to develop students' independent thinking skills.
- Review marking procedures to ensure consistency across all teaching groups.

277 In each of the last three years A level results have been well above the national average. Both the proportion of students obtaining at least a pass grade (A-E) and the proportion obtaining a higher grade pass (A-B) are above the national average. Generally, students do better in physical education than they do in their other A level subjects. The number of girls taking the subject varies from year to year. The small numbers in some year groups make comparisons between boys' and girls' performance unreliable.

278 Overall, standards in Year 13 are as expected. The highest attainers have a good command of a range of technical language and apply it accurately and effectively, as demonstrated during their discussion about aggressive behaviour in sport. These students make good progress. Lower attaining students have a basic knowledge of the physical factors affecting training, exercise and energy systems. In lessons, they find it difficult to explain their reasons or justify their answers to questions. Few students were able to work out the energy systems used in the 1500m. They are over-reliant on the teacher to help them through each stage of their thinking process. As a result, these students have not made better than satisfactory progress and, consequently, there is room for further development

279 Students in Year 12 produce work of a good standard. This represents good progress since the start of the course. Students have a good grasp of the social, moral and cultural influences that affect the provision for and participation in physical activity. High-attaining students demonstrate a thorough understanding of the aspects of fitness required to perform to a top level in sport. A critical analysis of their own chosen sport, submitted as coursework, shows the application of an extensive

range of theoretical principles and concepts. Students of all abilities achieve well in Year 12.

- 280 Overall, the quality of teaching in A level PE is good and students learn well as a result. Where teaching is most effective, lessons are well planned and teachers use a variety of material and resources, including the use of ICT, to promote the students' interest and enhance their learning. For example, in one Year 13 lesson observed, the PowerPoint programme was used to great effect for a revision quiz in the style of 'Who wants to be a Millionaire'. Teachers are skilful at making the work relevant to students. They use examples from the students' own experiences or sports in which they participate to illustrate concepts and further their understanding of a topic. In a Year 12 lesson, recent reports from the local newspaper about the annual Hallaton bottle-kicking game were used to form the basis for discussion on the characteristics of folk games. On the rare occasions when teaching was not so effective, students were given too few opportunities to develop their independent thinking skills. Their dependence on the teacher hindered achievement.
- 281 Teachers' interest and enthusiasm pass on to students and have a positive influence on learning. Students enjoy the subject and appreciate the individual support they receive from the teachers to help them succeed.
- 282 The department is very well led and managed. The head of department promotes good standards of teaching through a structured programme of monitoring, evaluation and support. There is a determination to improve further. Careful analysis of recent A-level results has led to changes in teaching approaches for some topics. Teachers monitor and evaluate students' attainment frequently to track their progress. Very effective marking helps students understand how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve further. However, there is a need to ensure a consistent approach to marking across all teachers in the department.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

Overall, the quality of provision in health and social care is good.

Strengths

- Achievement is good and results on the AVCE course are improving.
- There is a high level of retention, and the course completion rate is good.
- Students have very positive attitudes towards the subject and some are developing a career interest and commitment.
- Teaching is good; lessons are effective and very well planned.
- There is strong leadership of the subject and an experienced, enthusiastic team.

Areas for improvement

- Strategies to develop evaluation skills and to reinforce knowledge in order to improve examination performance further.
- The range and scope of resources to make more use of ICT and include contemporary sources of evidence and contact with professional expertise.

- 283 Overall, standards are above average. This is the first year of results on the AVCE course and these were lower than expected, with results in external assessment below those for coursework. Results gained on the Advanced GNVQ have been very good: the pass rate has been in line with the average and the proportion of distinction

awards has been consistently high. Students achieve well in relation to their previous attainment and they make very good progress. The number of students opting to study health and social care has grown and the retention rate is also very good.

- 284 The work of current students is above expectation. Students' folders and work in class indicate at least satisfactory progress for all students. Some show that they are making very good progress. Students have a secure understanding of how health services are organised. They have good background knowledge of factors influencing health and are aware of clients' rights and how their needs change at different stages of their lives. They discriminate between appropriate and inappropriate care and respond to case study questions with confidence and sensitivity. Students are less able than usual to make comparisons across areas of the course or assess trends than is often the case. For example, students cannot always comment on the effects of recent changes to the NHS or judge how well provision is made for different age groups.
- 285 Teaching is good; both confident and careful. Schemes of work and lesson plans are of very high quality. Preparation is thorough and the sequencing and linkages between lessons follow an explicit rationale to ensure that students build knowledge and skills consciously. In one example, students preparing for a practical activity to be carried out in a health or social care setting are taken through the differences between review and critical evaluation and benefit by producing adapted action plans that include organised opportunities for feedback, reflection and revision. Learning objectives are used well for devising activities and designing a structure for lessons. The approach is used consistently and students come to expect an effective introduction, varied activities and summary sessions. In this learning environment students are fully engaged and make rapid gains in understanding. Lively and creative responses ensue because students feel secure and can take part with confidence. Teachers are knowledgeable, put the care values promoted by the course into practice and encourage students to consider their own performance as carers as well as learners.
- 286 Students enjoy health and social care and learn in an atmosphere of trust and respect. They are attentive and prepared to work hard. They speak highly of the efforts made to co-ordinate the programme and appreciate the supportive relationship they have with their teachers. They accept responsibility well for the freedom they have been given. For example, students have made appropriate arrangements and have prepared conscientiously for the one-to-one and group interactions that are a practical element of the course. They feel involved and informed and describe their feelings of personal development in terms of acquiring tolerance towards others.
- 287 Leadership and management are very good. The subject co-ordinator is highly experienced and extremely efficient. Teaching effectiveness is a first priority and teachers work closely together, sharing strategies. Targets are set and monitored, assessment is methodical and well documented and data are used to support students' progress. There is a clear commitment to improvement, and a concerted effort has been made to enhance students' performance and specifically to increase their capabilities in critical analysis and evaluation. Key Skills development is integrated well into learning activities, and competences in communication skills are assessed. Teachers contribute resources to the course and the mix of the theoretical and practical learning is good. However, there is a need for further development of the breadth of students' understanding and, particularly, first-hand knowledge and experience.

288 This subject was not inspected in 1997.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

The inspection focused on AS and A level art, film studies and theatre studies. A few lessons were observed in expressive arts (drama and music).

ART

Overall, the quality of provision in art is good.

Strengths

- The course makes effective use of the exceptional resource of original art at the college.
- High proportions of students continue with art-related courses and careers after A Level.
- Students research themes well, applying knowledge and understanding creatively.
- Teachers provide good individual feedback in lessons, which promotes personal style.

Areas for improvement

- The course is too narrow to enable all students following a 2D, 3D or textiles option at GCSE an equal opportunity to progress at AS.
- The role of analytical drawing is insufficiently explored at an early stage of the course.
- Students have too few opportunities to encounter living artists.

289 Overall, standards are above expected levels. Since the previous inspection results have been maintained at a level slightly above those achieved nationally. Current students research independently using ICT selectively. Studies are presented creatively, and writing makes good use of the teachers' guidance relating to analysis. They talk about their work with knowledge, enthusiasm and personal commitment. Work often progresses to a confident scale, although techniques are insufficiently pursued to realise the full potential of ideas.

290 The quality of teaching is sound overall, with some teaching being good. The most effective lessons make good use of the short blocks of time by setting challenging tasks followed by well-managed group reviews of outcomes. Relationships between students and teachers are a consistent strength. Teachers' knowledge of individuals is often used well to maintain challenge by intervening with a good balance of encouragement with criticism. Although the work of past students is used as a teaching resource, reference to the work of different artists to exemplify objectives is too infrequent. Although demonstration is used effectively in some lessons to start projects off, the depth of students' development is sometimes constrained by limited experience of how materials and techniques are pursued by different artists.

291 Gallery visits make an evident impact upon students' knowledge and understanding, although encounters with living artists are rare. The range of original paintings, prints, ceramics and sculptures in the school collection have been used well by students, and their responses to this work have unrealised potential to impact upon the cultural awareness of the whole college. For several students imaginative choices of subjects have created learning opportunities which are complementary. For example, a student's work in film studies has positively influenced her imagery in capturing

human experiences. A visit to Leicester College is used well to help students learn about possible course and career development after the sixth form. As a result, students are generally enthusiastic about the course. Although students were observed working hard in lesson time, their preparation and follow-up to lessons at AS level could be improved. The sixth-form studio is currently underused as a resource to promote independence.

- 292 Teachers provide good feedback to students about their work. Assessment is regularly made. Students' self-evaluation is insufficiently used to check their understanding about how to progress in relation to the assessment objectives. The quality of leadership and management is satisfactory. Communications between different teachers of the same groups are effective. The involvement of a wider range of expertise is an area for development, to better build on GCSE options and capitalise on the depth of teaching skills evident in 3D. A specific development plan is a priority for the subject to develop the full potential of students where the ethos provides an excellent basis for the subject to flourish.
- 293 Since the previous inspection, when no specific sixth-form issues were raised, the transition from A-level courses to AS and A2 has been competently managed.

FILM STUDIES

Overall, the quality of provision in film studies is very good.

Strengths

- Very good results at AS and A2 overall, with consistently high A to E passes and A to B passes on a rising trend over the last three years.
- The enthusiasm and expertise of the film studies staff, with excellent leadership and management from the head of department.
- Excellent technician support.
- Very good recruitment and commitment of the students to the course (almost doubling since 2001).
- Good resources provision, including reference in the Information Centre and video stock.

Areas for improvement.

- To continue to build up reference material in the Information Centre, particularly to support research into the study of dominant film directors.

- 294 Results at AS and A level have been consistently good over recent years. There have been significant increases over the last two years, with A to B grades at AS level improving from 70.3 per cent in 2001 to 76.8 per cent in 2002. Similarly, the number of A-B grades at A2 level has increased over the same period from 62 per cent to 68.2 per cent, with A to E passes being maintained at 100 per cent or occasionally just under at both AS and A2 level. Students consistently achieve above their predicted grades and performance is above average.
- 295 Film Studies is a very popular A-level subject, attracting comparatively high numbers of students, with an increasing entry year on year. There is a good balance in recruitment from both boys and girls. Girls perform slightly better than boys in examinations but the margin is not significant. The more and most able achieve well, finding scope within the focus on independent learning to excel. Students attain high standards of course work, both in terms of presentational values and content. The course work produced receives very favourable comments in examiners' reports.

Those students who have taken media studies at GCSE in Year 11 have an initial advantage. However, students soon catch up and groups make equal progress. Written work is extended, detailed and generally has a high quality of presentation. Technical concepts and vocabulary are used with fluency. ICT is used extensively for word processing, the development of graphics and layout. Students build up an extensive repertoire of technical vocabulary over the course, which they apply effectively to film analysis. They can 'read' film texts well, and discuss techniques and structures with confidence. This was done well in the Year 12 lessons on the film 'Let Him Have It' by Peter Medak, which portrays the events leading up to the Derek Bentley murder case. Assisted by skilled questioning by the teacher, students talked well about the director's intentions and the effects used. Speaking and listening skills are developed effectively through the emphasis on collaborative group work.

- 296 The quality of teaching is high, with good and better teaching being consistently observed during the inspection week. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and understanding. Those who are not specialists are keen to learn and they are developing film studies skills effectively. Teachers have a high level of commitment to and enthusiasm for the subject and this engenders the same positive response in the students, which contributes significantly to the good results achieved at the end of the course. Schemes of work are well thought out, with challenging activities and rigorous assessment. The quality of comments and verbal feedback is a feature of some excellence and is a significant factor in the progress made by students. Course work is of a high standard, with the quality of research and independent learning high. This was seen well in the extended course work response of a student who was also taking psychology, who very ably applied Freudian analysis to Hitchcock's films. Teachers use a good range of teaching methods, including group work, research and independent practical work, and effective use is made of ICT to a high level. Lessons start well with a sharing of the learning objectives and, in one Year 12 group, a quick-fire question game of 'Puttnam', which asks students in turn to make connections linked to film studies. This gets the students involved and encourages their inventiveness, as well as testing their knowledge. The department produces effective resources for students, in addition to a very good range of reference books in the Information Centre and film stock. Of particular merit is the stock of excellent and relevant clips to illustrate teaching points and for use in detailed analysis. Very good reference was made of the recent Oscar ceremony, particularly focusing on the Michael Moore speech which was neatly tied in to their study of independent films and film-makers. The extra-curricular experiences for students in media studies and film studies broaden provision beyond the classroom.
- 297 Students develop mature attitudes over the two-year course. They are enthusiastic about the course and enjoy the challenge of the academic content as much as deep involvement with film. In discussion with a group of Year 12 and 13 students it became clear that the course captured their interest and had changed the way they viewed film. They were quick to praise the quality of teaching and the excellent working relationships between staff and students. The level of students' commitment and application is an excellent feature of the work in film studies. They respect the depth of knowledge of their teachers and enjoy learning new skills for accessing film texts.
- 298 Leadership and management of the department are excellent features which come directly from the head of department's enthusiasm and passion for media and film studies. There is, as a consequence, a firm team commitment to enfranchising students to cope with a media and film- rich world. The leadership also has considerable examination experience and expertise, which means that the

department and students prepare very effectively for the examinations. The department has the part-time use of an excellent technician, with considerable expertise with media equipment. Overall provision is very good. However, the 50 minute lesson is not ideal for this kind of subject where extended viewing and working is curtailed and continuity of learning is impeded.

- 299 The film studies course was not commented upon in the previous inspection report. However, high standards have been significantly improved over recent years.

THEATRE STUDIES

Overall, the quality of provision in theatre studies is good.

Strengths

- Good results overall, with consistently very good A-E passes and many students improving on their predicted grades.
- Enthusiasm and commitment of students.
- Good teaching and the very good working relations between staff and students.
- Quality of practical drama work and written work in theatre studies.
- Very good extra-curricular provision and performances.
- The excellent integration and support (particularly from fellow students) for visually impaired students.

Areas for improvement

- Provide time at the end each lesson to review and reflect on performance against learning objectives.
- Improve boys' attainment and improve results at higher grades, particularly at AS level.
- Cost short and medium term developments for drama, particularly for refurbishment of the accommodation and resourcing.
- Review health and safety guidance to cover drama studio usage.

- 300 The department achieves good results overall. Both AS level at the end of Year 12 and A2 level at the end of Year 13 have produced very good A-E passes for the last two years. The pass rate at A-B grades is generally good, though in 2002 at AS level nine students 'ceilinged' at C grade. In 2002 at the end of Year 13, the A2 results showed 72.7 per cent of the entry (11 students) achieved grades A-B, five of them A grades and all students passed at grades A-D. Many students achieve above their predicted grades. Performance is generally above the national average. Girls generally achieve better than boys; however, far fewer boys than girls elect to do theatre studies. The more and most able students achieve well owing to the focus on independent group work required for course work assessment.

- 301 Students make good progress over the two years. They show considerable ability in working with text, both in accessing meaning and in interpretation through performance. Course work is of a very good standard, with the extended writing assignments generally structured well and containing perceptive content. Most theatre studies students have taken drama or expressive arts GCSE and, as a consequence, have good skills when working with texts, developing ideas for staging and interpreting character. This was seen to good effect in the Year 12 lesson where students developed performances of scenes from 'A Street Car Named Desire' by Tennessee Williams. This led to excellent characterised readings and assured

movement. Students generally show an ability to adopt roles and sustain them. Both Year 12 and Year 13 groups demonstrate good collaborative skills.

- 302 The quality of teaching is at least good, with some very good features. The newly appointed head of drama is enthusiastic, with a secure knowledge and understanding of drama and theatre arts, and offers considerable practical theatre experience. A good feature of the lessons is that students are given plenty of scope to explore texts independently and create their responses to them. Intervention by the teacher is judicious and helps to deepen the response or to open other alternatives. Lessons always start with a purposeful brief to share learning objectives and recaps on previous work. There is less rigour in providing sufficient time at the end of the lesson for reflection on performance and on what has been learnt. Schemes of work contain challenging activities, and assessment is carried out effectively. A good range of teaching methods is used, including small group work, research and independent practical work. Students demonstrate confidence in performance and collaborative group work. They discuss and access texts well. The theatre studies course, as a consequence, contributes significantly to the students' personal and social development. The department, in conjunction with the wider expressive arts department, provides very good extra-curricular activities and enrichment. From evidence in documentation and comments from parents and student, school productions are traditionally a quality feature within the college calendar and they are supported well by students.
- 303 Students are very positive about theatre arts and show considerable commitment and enthusiasm for their course work. Relationships between teacher and students are a very good feature. Students are willing to listen to advice and adapt performance accordingly because they respect the knowledge of the teacher. Theatre studies is a very inclusive and supportive course; this is shown in both the Year 12 and the Year 13 groups where there is excellent integration of two visually impaired students. Not only do they receive very good support from their LSAs but they also receive great support from the other students. This allows them to play a full part in all aspects of the course, including performance. This was seen in both the Year 12 lesson on 'A Street Car Named Desire' and the Year 13 lesson where groups performed scenes from 'The Cherry Orchard' in which both boys acted out main roles.
- 304 The new head of drama is providing enthusiasm, creative drive and rigour to the drama and theatre arts courses. There is very good liaison with the other teams within the wider expressive arts department, particularly music. The head of the expressive arts department plays an important mentoring role and supports the work of the drama and theatre arts department well. There is very good studio space which is in need of some refurbishment, particularly the floor and some wall panels. In part, the studio suffers from multiple use. It has appropriate lighting facilities; however, the lanterns are now old. Costing of short and medium-term developments is required. More comprehensive health and safety guidance for drama is required in the current health and safety guidance for expressive arts.
- 305 The previous inspection report did not include theatre studies; however, performance has been maintained at a high level.

HUMANITIES

The inspection focused on AS and A-level courses in geography, psychology and sociology.

GEOGRAPHY

The overall quality of provision in geography is good.

Strengths

- Teaching is consistently good, with some being very good.
- The geography curriculum successfully integrates knowledge and skills.
- There is good management, organisation and planning.
- Very good opportunities are provided for fieldwork and the enrichment of learning.

Areas for improvement

- Challenge to improve the attainment of more-able students.
- Students need to develop greater self-knowledge of their own learning.

306 Standards of attainment in geography are improving. A-level results in recent years have been in line with the national average, although there was a dip in 2001. In 2002, all students entered were successful and nearly 40 per cent obtained grades A and B. In the 2002 AS examinations, all students were successful and 45 per cent obtained grades A and B. Students performed better overall in geography than in their other subjects.

307 Standards of current students are above national expectation. In Year 13, work on Trans- National Corporations (TNCs) showed that students had good research skills and could work well independently. They competently extracted relevant information from a variety of sources and, in a plenary session at the end of the lesson, they could relate their information on TNCs to issues of globalisation. In a lesson on climate, all students extracted relevant information on the “El Nino” effect from the Internet and most students could offer a sound description of global atmospheric circulation. The most able students were comfortable offering detailed responses to questions about the Hadley cell and coriolis force. Students also worked well in groups in Year 12, annotating photographs of the rural-urban fringe and working together to produce relevant case study notes from a video on the management of coasts. Students produced work of a high standard when working on more extended pieces of work, for example in Year 12 on Amboseli National Park, or in Year 13 on the Mississippi river. The range of skills that have been developed are demonstrated well in project work.

308 The quality of teaching and learning in the sixth form is consistently good, with some being very good. Teachers have good knowledge and understanding, plan carefully, employ effective teaching methods, use questions well and have high expectations. They set homework, assess regularly and provide consistently good feedback on how students can improve. All lessons have clear objectives which are shared with students, and the use of geographical terms and phrases is encouraged. The A-level course is well resourced and access to wireless lap-top computers in geography classrooms provides students with good opportunities to use information technology to support their learning. As a result, students acquire skills, knowledge and understanding and work with high productivity. Teaching groups contain quite a wide range of ability but students generally undertake the same work. More-able students would benefit from increased challenge, more extended work and greater awareness of what is demanded at different A-level grades.

309 Students are positive in their response to the geography course. They value the good opportunities provided for residential fieldwork in the Peak District and for course enrichment with a five-day visit to New York. They are very supportive of geography

staff, spoke of being treated differently in the sixth form and had confidence in the teaching they receive. In lessons, relationships with teachers are very good, students are keen to contribute and they work with enthusiasm.

- 310 Management of the A level course is good. Planning and organisation of the curriculum are good and students benefit from this. The provision of wireless Internet access in classrooms shows a firm commitment to improving learning opportunities. Teachers specialise in delivering units of the course and work well together to provide a positive experience for students.
- 311 Progress since the previous inspection has been satisfactory. Information technology is now being used extensively to support learning. Students' understanding of physical processes is as secure as their understanding of human processes. However, there remains a need to extend the learning and skills of more-able students further.

PSYCHOLOGY

Overall, the quality of provision in psychology is very good.

Strengths

- A-level results are well above average.
- Well-qualified and experienced staff have good subject knowledge.
- Planning is thorough and teaching is enthusiastic and purposeful.
- There are very good relationships between teachers and students.
- Students are well motivated and make very good progress.

Areas for improvement

- More opportunities are needed to promote personal, social and cultural development.
- In the light of the large number of students opting to study psychology, teaching spaces are sometimes cramped and access to ICT is limited.
- Contributions from professionals working in the field should be increased.

- 312 A-level results in 2001 were well above average and compare well against the top quarter of schools in the country. A well-established pattern includes a very high completion rate and a high proportion of A and B grades. Students achieve well in psychology; most achieve at least their predicted grade, more than two-thirds often exceed what is expected, many of them by as much as two grades. The good 2001 AS and A-level results were maintained in 2002. Completion rates on AS and A-level courses are high and more students continue the study of the subject to A-level.
- 313 The work seen of current students is well above national expectation and reflects a significant challenge to students. The work of a visually impaired student is of good quality and of similar coverage to that of other students. Files are very well organised and comprehensive; categorised notes provide a valuable resource for learning. In Year 12, students already have confident use of specialist vocabulary, define and clarify concepts and use evidence carefully to support judgements. Practical activities are linked to published studies. For example, at the same time that Eysenck's Personality Inventory was introduced in one lesson, the relevant tests were used as a vehicle to ensure that students experienced elements of research design, and in this case issues of consistency and interpretation were perceived aptly and rapidly. In Year 13, students have a secure understanding of methodological issues and ethical concerns. Their independent research activities have been well designed

and conducted competently, issues of reliability and validity are understood and conclusions are evaluated with maturity and balance.

- 314 Teaching is very good. It is enthusiastic and effective. Relationships with students are strong, good humoured and respectful. An industrious working atmosphere creates the right level of motivation and expectation and there is a conspicuous commitment to effective learning and high achievement for all students. Teachers have extremely good command of subject knowledge. They provide clear explanations and are very skilled in the use of questioning. This was seen to very good effect in a lesson exploring, delicately yet deeply, the Mind-Body interaction and relationship. Schemes of work and lessons are very carefully prepared and planning is a strength. Lessons and units of work have clear and appropriate learning objectives. They are well structured, with a range of activities and learning opportunities, including formal teaching inputs, class discussions, paired and small group work. Particular attention is given to consolidating learning and developing analytical skills, as was noted in a discussion on Nature versus Nurture that included revision of earlier work on studies into twins and intelligence. Teachers have a secure grasp of assessment criteria and assess students' work constructively. Progress is monitored rigorously and feedback on performance indicates clearly where students are in relation to the point that they want to reach by the end of the course.
- 315 Students value the opportunities provided in psychology. They enjoy lessons and their confidence appears to grow markedly across the course. They arrive prepared to work hard and apply intellectual effort. They become skilled in identifying strengths and limitations, but also welcome the support and challenge they get from their teachers. They learn well for themselves and meet unfamiliar situations or problems with objectivity. They find the subject has personal relevance and some students have developed a long-term interest.
- 316 Leadership and management are strong. Co-ordination is effective and planning is thorough and well developed. Careful analysis is made of performance data and the information is used to support students' progress. Action is taken to rectify particular weaknesses, like rotating tutorial sessions for large groups, and plans for future provision are clear. Teachers are passionate about the subject and their individual talents are used to the full. Teamwork is effective in ensuring consistently high standards.

SOCIOLOGY

The overall provision for sociology is very good.

Strengths

- Teachers have very good knowledge and understanding of the subject and use a good range of teaching methods.
- Students achieve good examination results and good AS level when compared with their performance in other subjects.
- Students' attitude to their work is very positive. They are enthusiastic about the subject and the teaching and learning opportunities they experience.
- Sociology makes a very good contribution to students' social, moral, and cultural development.
- Assessment information and analysis of students' examination performance is used well to inform teaching.

Areas for improvement

- Raise standards further at AS level by setting specific targets, especially for low-attaining students and those who have not had experience of the subject at GCSE.
- Monitor and evaluate teaching in order to share good practice.

317 Only a relatively small number of students took the A-level sociology examination in 2002. All students who entered the examination gained a pass grade and did well in sociology when compared with their other subjects. In the previous two years, results achieved in the A-level examination had been significantly above the national average. In 2001, over two-thirds of students who entered gained an A or B grade, compared with just over one-third nationally, and all students gained a pass grade. It is not possible to compare male and female results because, in the recent past, few boys took the course. However, there is now a better gender balance in the current Year 13 group. Results in the first two years of AS-level examinations show a rising trend. However, results in 2001 were significantly below the national average at A and B grades and slightly below the national average for students gaining a pass grade. This reflects the school's policy of enabling students to opt to study sociology at AS level without prior experience of the subject at GCSE. Results improved in 2002.

318 The standard of work of current students is at a level which is above what would be expected nationally, with oral contributions to the lessons at a higher standard than students' written contributions. In Year 13, students achieve well in comparison with their AS results. The lesson structure, with a variety of activities including whole-class and small group work and clear teachers' explanations of sociological terms, enables all students to be involved and make good progress in their learning. For example, in a lesson on the stratification of work, students interpreted quite complex graphs, showing job levels by gender and ethnic groups, and offered good sociological reasons for these results.

319 Students in the current Year 12 make good progress in their course. In a lesson looking at different sociological theories of the role the family plays in society today, students showed good knowledge and understanding of the main theoretical perspectives and, by the end of the lesson, they discussed, in a thoughtful and analytical way, the difficulties of measuring how symmetrical modern families are.

320 Teaching is invariably very good and students learn well as a result. Teachers' subject knowledge and understanding is very good. Questions are used effectively

and are well targeted at particular students, both to draw all students into the discussion and also check their understanding of the work. Teachers plan lessons that incorporate a variety of activities that hold students' attention and make the work interesting. Teachers are particularly good at explaining sociological terminology and concepts in ways that make them accessible to students and relate them to their own experiences. For example, in the same Year 12 lesson on sociological theories of the role the family plays in society today, the teacher successfully used students' own personal experience of family life to see the differences in the way families operate. This enabled students to understand, in a practical way, the difficult theoretical concept of the symmetrical family. Although there are two AS-level teaching groups, difficulties in timetabling means that students are not able to be taught in separate groups based on prior experience of the subject. This makes it difficult for teachers to target the different needs of students and enable them all to make more rapid progress.

- 321 Students learn very well. They show high levels of interest and concentration in lessons. Relationships are a strength and students collaborate well with each other and with their teachers. Students respond well to teachers' questions and are not afraid to challenge each other and the teacher when making a point. Written work is satisfactory; generally, marking is regular, and incorrect spelling, especially of sociological terms, is corrected. In Year 13 in particular, teachers give good written feedback on essays and relate marks well to the criteria of the A-level examination..
- 322 Students are very positive about the subject. They enjoy the different styles of teaching they experience and say that this makes the subject interesting and helps their learning. They feel they are given good opportunities to do research, including using the Internet to develop their independent learning skills, and are given good information from teachers on how well they are doing and how they can improve further. They believe teachers have a good understanding of what examiners are looking for in responses to questions and they feel well prepared for examinations.
- 323 The subject makes a very significant contribution to the development of students' social, moral, and cultural development. The subject content lends itself very well to raising issues in these areas and teachers actively encourage students to sensitively discuss and debate these in lessons. For example, in the Year 13 lesson on the stratification of work roles by gender and ethnic groups, students showed sensitivity and understanding to some of the real causes of the inequalities that exist and how not to rely on stereotypes often given by the popular press.
- 324 Leadership and management of the subject are very good. Subject documentation is good and there has been some good work in analysing examination performance and developing schemes of work to meet the changing demands of examinations over recent years. The subject co-ordinator is committed to building on what has already been achieved and to raising standards further.
- 325 There has been good progress since the previous inspection when progress and achievement at AS level were judged to be above average. Progress and standards are still above average and AS level has been successfully introduced.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

The inspection covered AS and A2 courses in English, English language and English language and literature, and lessons in all three subjects were inspected. In general, fewer students study English language than study the other two subjects. French was inspected and German sampled.

ENGLISH

Overall, the quality of provision in English is good.

Strengths

- Good subject knowledge leading to good teaching and learning.
- Satisfactory, and often good, achievement in lessons and over time.
- Good relationships between teachers and students.

Areas for improvement

- Ensuring that good pace of learning is maintained for all students.
- Securing greater consistency in results across the three subjects offered.

- 326 There are currently ninety-three students studying English in Year 13, representing good follow-on retention rates from AS in Year 12. Results have fluctuated. In 2001, there were no entries in A-level English language and literature, but in 2002, 88 per cent of students attained a pass grade. In 2001, all students attained pass grades in A-level English language and in A-level English literature, but results in these two subjects declined in 2002. Fewer students attained grades A and B in English language in 2001 than was the case nationally and in comparison with English literature.
- 327 Current standards are in line with national expectation, with a number of students attaining standards above those normally seen. Achievement is generally good compared with students' prior attainment. In English language, students use key technical terms to describe their analysis of a range of written material. A number of students identify the social context of texts, show good editorial skills and recognise style, structure, purpose and tone to above-average levels. In one Year 13 lesson, students presented good work on a scripted audio guide, making effective use of the conventions. Some less able students show a lack of confidence and critical discernment in their evaluation of texts, and the transition from their GCSE English courses to higher level textual analysis is particularly challenging. These students require very structured induction into the subject in Year 12.
- 328 In English literature, students apply effective techniques to textual analysis, respond to texts and consider style and structure as well as character and motive. They appreciate the varieties of techniques writers apply to different genres. In one Year 13 lesson, students showed good understanding of key themes in "A Streetcar Named Desire", and in a Year 12 lesson, students showed good, close critical analysis of the syntactic and other features in "Mending Wall".
- 329 In English language and literature, students identify lexical fields and consider the way attitudes and values are conveyed in literature. Some students display a lack of speed and independence in identifying features of language and genre, and in Year 12, some students have a limited approach to textual analysis, tackling it at the level of meaning rather than style, and missing key stylistic conventions.

- 330 The quality of teaching is good overall. Strengths of the teaching include good subject knowledge, good planning and the use of a wide range of well-chosen texts and assignments. Teachers intervene supportively in students' learning, ensuring that they make good progress. Students are encouraged to engage in lively debate, such as in a Year 13 lesson on attitudes and values. Teachers frequently act as effective facilitators of learning, encouraging students to formulate their own ideas and opinions and pointing up further areas for them to explore and consider. In the best lessons, teachers have high expectations and do not settle for satisfactory replies to questions but probe for higher-level responses. This approach was evident in a Year 13 lesson considering genre, form, attitudes and values across a range of texts. In some otherwise satisfactory lessons, the pace of learning stalled because of the need to support less-able students who were finding the tasks more challenging, or because the teacher concentrated for too long on one group of students at the expense of the others.
- 331 Students respond well to their English courses and this contributes to the good standards of attainment and progress which they achieve. In discussion with students it was clear that they were positive about their experiences of English in the sixth form and that they valued the commitment and expertise of their teachers.
- 332 Work in the sixth form is well managed and the team is effectively led. There is a clear focus on raising standards and further developing teaching and learning. Assessment procedures are clear and reflect the assessment objectives of the examination courses being studied. The department has responded constructively to changes in syllabuses and examination requirements, and has maintained the good features identified in the previous inspection. There is a need to consider further the management issues arising from offering three courses at AS and A level, including the further development of subject expertise and the deployment of staff. Evaluation of the team's work is rigorous and honest, and the department is therefore well placed to improve provision further.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

The main focus of the inspection was French. German provision was sampled. Few students take German post-16 but recent results have been good. Two lessons of German were observed. The one Year 13 student is taught together with the small group of Year 12 students. Standards are broadly in line with expectations. However, there is a wide range of ability from prospects of a high grade to insecure knowledge of language structures. The teaching is satisfactory.

FRENCH

Overall, the quality of provision for French is good.

Strengths

- Teaching is good: teachers have good subject knowledge, know the syllabus requirements well, are enthusiastic and dedicated.
- Teachers track students' progress well and give them clear guidance about how to improve.
- The French assistant makes a valuable contribution to students' understanding and speaking skills.

Areas for improvement

- Variety in teaching and learning styles.
- Students' confidence and fluency in speaking.

- 333 In French, the number of students entered for the AS and A-level examination has fluctuated and is generally low. In 2001, seven students were entered for the AS examination and results were close to the national average. AS results dropped in 2002, but more students were entered. At A level, eight students were entered in 2001 and results were below average at grades A to E. In 2002, six students started the A level course, but only three completed the course successfully and all achieved a pass.
- 334 Standards of current students are mostly above national expectation. The three Year 12 students show good grammatical awareness. They think through what they have to write intelligently and maturely. They read aloud with meaning and good pronunciation. Year 13 students are relatively less advanced, but have a wider range of skills and command of the language. Standards of speaking are variable in both years, from students who are fluent and confident to those who are not so. Three students, forthcoming in speaking, took part in a lively debate about capital punishment, albeit with varying levels of accuracy. Writing shows good knowledge of French structures and a reasonable range of vocabulary. The best writing is also accurate but the weaker students have a limited range of expression and make some basic mistakes in applying their grammatical knowledge. Standards here are broadly in line with expectations. The visually impaired student is ably supported by a teaching assistant and has appropriately prepared resources, so he participates fully in lessons and is making good progress, particularly in speaking and listening.
- 335 Teaching is good. It is shared between two teachers who have very good command of French and are very experienced in helping students to meet the syllabus requirements. They know the students well and guide them expertly towards their targets. There is little variety in learning styles but the teachers support the students enthusiastically, expertly prompting and probing their knowledge of French. For example, in a Year 12 lesson, the teacher's skilful questioning made the students think carefully about how to apply their grammatical knowledge and to refine their translation skills. Relationships are good. Teachers outline clearly what they expect students to learn. They speak in good French nearly all the time, encouraging students to respond in French and so improve their range of vocabulary. Students bring positive attitudes and good learning skills to their studies. This results in a good pace of learning.
- 336 Students respond intelligently, asking appropriate questions and answering well. They try hard to use the French they know. Most join enthusiastically, although one or two are reticent. For example, on a lively debate on the death penalty, some students took the lead making great efforts to articulate their thoughts in French whilst others remained too passive, rarely taking part.
- 337 There have been staffing problems, which contributed significantly to the dip in results last year. However, provision is well managed and teachers work closely together. They track students' progress well and give them clear guidance about how to improve, both orally and in writing. This helps students to know how well they are doing and encourages them to learn better. Some good use is made of ICT, for example for students to research authentic languages sites on the Internet and to produce their own presentations. Students also benefit from the valuable presence of the French assistant who helps them to develop their understanding and speaking skills.