

**INSPECTION UNDER SECTION 9 OF  
THE EDUCATION (SCHOOLS) ACT 1992**

**Bideford College  
Abbotsham Road  
Bideford  
Devon  
EX39 3AR**

School Number: 911/4061

**18th - 22nd March 1996**

By

Mr M Pavey  
Registered Inspector number: T12261

26th April 1996

Under OFSTED contract number S5/002097

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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out under Section 9 of the Education (Schools) Act 1992. Its purpose was to report on:

- \*the education standards achieved in the school;
- \*the quality of education provided by the school;
- \*whether the financial resources made available to the school are managed efficiently;  
and
- \*the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils at the school.

The findings of the inspection will contribute to the annual report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools to the Secretary of State for Education.

## Basic information about the school

1	Name of school:	
	Type of school:	Comprehensive all-through
	Status:	County
	Age range of pupils:	11-18
	Headteacher:	Mr B Love
	Address of school:	Abbotsham Road Bideford Devon EX39 3AR
	Telephone:	01237 477611
	Name and address of appropriate authority:	The governing body
	Local authority area:	Devon
	Department for Education School Number:	911/4061
	Name of Registered Inspector:	Mr Martin Pavey
	Dates of inspection:	18th - 22nd March 1996

## 1.2 Intake of pupils and the area served by the school

2 Bideford College is an 11-18 community comprehensive school of 1531 students including 196 in the sixth form. It has a large and successful community education programme. The college serves the town of Bideford in North Devon and many surrounding villages. The socio-economic circumstances of the area are generally favourable.

### School data and indicators

#### 3 Number of pupils in each year group

	Boys	Girls	Total
Year 7	131	112	243
243Year 8	131	144	275
Year 9	138	123	261
Year 10	155	137	292
Year 11	130	134	264
Year 12	66	57	123
Year 13	32	41	73
Total	783	748	1531

### Special educational needs

Number of pupils having statements of special educational needs: 81

### Free school meals

Percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals: 18.2

### Teachers and classes

Full-time equivalent teachers: 92.60

Pupil to teacher ratio: 16.53

Contact ratio: 82.6

Average teaching group size in Years 7-11:

### Teaching time per week

	Hours	Minutes
Key Stage 3	23	45

Key Stage 4	23	45
Sixth Form	23	45

### Pupil attendance

Percentage attendance figures for each year group for the governors' Annual Report to parents and for the third week of the term prior to the term of the inspection.

Year	Annual Report 1994-95	Third week in the term prior to the term of the inspection		
	Unauthorised absence	Actual Attendance	Authorised Absence	Unauthorised absence
Year 7		96.2	3.8	
Year 8		93.0	6.6	0.4
Year 9		91.5	8.0	0.5
Year 10		90.8	8.6	0.6
Year 11		87.8	11.6	0.6
Year 12				
Year 13				
Overall		92.0	7.4	0.5

### Number of exclusions in the last 12 months

Year	Temporary	Indefinite	Permanent	Ethnic Minority groups
	Boys Girls	Boys Girls	Boys Girls	Boys Girls
Year 7	92			
Year 8	62		2	
Year 9	71		1	
Year 10	32			
Year 11	82		1	
Year 12				
Year 13				

**Total exclusions:** 46

## National Curriculum assessments and public examination results

### Key Stage 4

#### Public Examination Results: GCSE

	School Results 1994			School Results 1995		
	Boys	Girls	All	Boys	Girls	All
<b>GCSE Examination Results</b>						
Number of pupils in Year 11:			240			263
<b>Percentage of pupils</b>						
Entered for 5+ GCSEs	87.6	92.8	90.0	73.8	88.5	80.6
Achieving 5+ grades A-C	26.0	37.0	31.1	39.0	26.0	33.0
Achieving 5+ grades A-G	87.0	93.0	89.8	82.0	85.0	83.4
Entered for 1+ GCSEs				81.0	88.0	84.2
Achieving 1+ grades A-C				31.0	19.0	25.4
Achieving 1+ grades A-G				74.0	81.0	77.2
Entered for all three subjects, English, maths and science						
Achieving grades A-C						
Achieving grades A-G in all of EN, MA and SC						

	LEA Area <sup>2</sup> 1993	England <sup>2</sup> 1995	
	All	Boys	Girls
<b>GCSE Examination Results</b>			
<b>Percentage of pupils</b>	-		
Entered for 5+ GCSEs	-	90.2	92.5
Achieving 5+ grades A-C	-	36.6	45.8
Achieving 5+ grades A-G	-	85.7	89.2
Entered for 1+ GCSEs	-	91.5	95.8
Achieving 1+ grades A-C	-	62.9	74.5
Achieving 1+ grades A-G	-	92.9	94.2

**Note 1** Number of pupils in Year 11 in January of each examination year.

**Note 2** These national statistics apply to all maintained schools in the LEA area or England.



## Other qualifications taken by Year 11 pupils

Type of Award	Awarding Body	Level	Vocational Area	Entries	Results
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NONE

## Sixth Form examination results

### Most Recent Year 1995

Points for	Grade A	Grade B	Grade C	Grade D	Grade E			
A	10	8	6	4	2			
AS	5	4	3	2	1	Boys	Girls	All
No. Pupils entered for fewer than 2 A levels						1	2	3
Avg. point score of pupils entered fewer than 2 A levels						0.00	4.00	2.67
No. Pupils entered for 2 or more A levels						29	34	63
Avg. point score of pupils entered for 2 or more A levels						15.50	17.40	16.53
No. Pupils on final year vocational course						19	21	40
Percentage of entry achieving qualifications						42%	43%	

### Previous Year 1994

Points for	Grade A	Grade B	Grade C	Grade D	Grade E			
A	10	8	6	4	2			
AS	5	4	3	2	1	Boys	Girls	All
No. Pupils entered for fewer than 2 A levels						2	1	3
Avg. point score of pupils entered fewer than 2 A levels						2.00	6.00	3.33
No. Pupils entered for 2 or more A levels						30	26	56
Avg. point score of pupils entered for 2 or more A levels						14.70	9.90	12.47
No. Pupils on final year vocational course						24	25	49
Percentage of entry achieving qualifications						42%	48%	

## Other 17+ and 18+ examinations or accreditation

### Most Recent Year 1995

Type of Awards	Awarding Body	Level	Vocational	Entries Area	Results
DVE partial	C & G	Int	General	12	4 full awards, 6 award
GNVQ partial	C & G	Int	Business studies	22	12 full awards, 6 award
GNVQ units	C & G	2	Manufacturing	6	1 left, 1 pass, 4 x 3/4

### Previous Year 1994

Type of Awards	Awarding Body	Level	Vocational	Entries Area	Results
DVE partial	C & G	Int	General	33	11 full awards, 22 award
GNVQ partial	BTEC	Int	Business studies	16	11 full awards, 2 award

## What pupils do on leaving school

Figures show the percentage of the year group.

	Further education or school	Employment	Youth Training	Other
End of Year 11	68.0	9.0	10.0	13.0

	Further education or school	Employment	Youth Training	Other
End of 1st Year 6th				

	Further education	Higher	Employment	Other

	or school	education		
End of 6th Form				

## Financial information

### Income (£)

	<b>Last full financial year</b>	<b>Current year *</b>
Balance brought forward	7487	-19025
Recurrent income; e.g. formula funding, annual maintenance grant, fees	3221365	3158601
Other grants, allocations or special purpose grants	27467	29006
TVEI	23597	0
Other income managed by the school, including lettings and funds raised	140667	100000
<b>Total</b>	<b>342093</b>	<b>3268582</b>

### Expenditure

	<b>Last full financial year</b>	<b>Budget allocation for current year</b>
Teaching staff	245047	2442000
Other staff	281775	317014
Educational resources:	216215	149114
Premises costs	349952	263057
Capital projects	35314	29006
Other costs	102665	103391
<b>Total</b>	<b>3439968</b>	<b>3303582</b>

<b>Expenditure per pupil:</b>	2234	2158
<b>Expenditure per pupil on educational resources:</b>	140	97

### **Record of the evidence base of the inspection**

4 The team consisted of 15 inspectors. During the week, over 250 lessons, 28 registration sessions, 10 assemblies and a range of extra curricular activities were inspected. All full time teachers present were seen teaching at least once and many several times. Planned discussions were held with 27 members of staff and informal discussions with a large number. The registered inspector met the chairs of governors' committees. All the available written work of a sample of six pupils from each year group in years 7-11 was inspected, as well as the written work of other pupils collected for separate scrutiny, and that of many pupils in the course of lesson observations. Planned discussions were held with the six pupils in years 7-11 and with sixth formers, and informal conversations with many more. A large amount of documentation provided by the school was analysed both before and during the inspection. The registered inspector held a meeting attended by 83 parents before the inspection. The team considered responses from 215 parents to a questionnaire about their opinion of the school.

### **Main Findings**

5 Bideford College provides a sound education with some notable features. These include good results in Advanced level examinations, the good quality of relationships within the college and the many social opportunities for pupils. The very good community education programme and the warm and purposeful leadership of the principal and senior staff are also notable features of the college.

### **Standards achieved**

6 Tests taken on entry to the college disclose overall levels of achievement somewhat below the national mean level, though the full ability range is present, including some very able students and a relatively large number with statements of special educational needs. These levels are reflected in the abilities seen in lessons at Key Stage 3 (KS3), though students are often making good use of their abilities at this level. The ability level is lower at Key Stage 4 (KS4), and though students generally achieve appropriately, fewer than at Key Stage 3 make good use of their abilities. GCSE results have been rising somewhat in recent years, though they remain below the national average achievement both for 5+ A\*-C and 5+ A\*-G grades. They are above the average in English, English literature and drama examinations, in line with or below in science, and below in mathematics and other subjects.

7 In the sixth form, standards in lessons are appropriate or high. A level results are good in most subjects, being very near the top in Devon comprehensive schools for achievement at grades A and B. The college has been setting academic targets for sixth formers, and these have helped to raise achievement.

8 Sixth formers generally have good learning skills, but in earlier years students' skills are less well developed in relation to their ages. In these years, reading is at least sound, and challenging texts are studied in English. Standards of writing are sound in English, but not secure in other subjects. Students listen well, but are often held back by a lack of confidence and vocabulary in their speaking. Basic number work is not strong, though graph work is often

good. Information technology skills are underdeveloped. The college should introduce a programme of teaching key skills at Key Stage 3 so that students enter Key Stage 4 with the necessary confidence and skills for further examination success.

### **Quality of Education provided**

9 At Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 students' learning is sound or better in the large majority of lessons. In most subjects learning is positive, with good attitudes and progress. In the sixth form learning is sound or better in virtually all lessons, and good in three out of five. In English, learning ranges from sound to very good. Students collaborate and concentrate well and produce lively, imaginative writing. Learning is generally sound or good in mathematics and students often work confidently and keenly. In science, learning is sound or better in two thirds of lessons. In all subjects, learning has many good features and few shortcomings, and less able students make good progress when help is available. Students enjoy making progress in the practical skills they need in individual lessons, but they are less keen on the key skills such as writing and number, which the college needs to encourage.

10 Teaching is also sound or better in the large majority of lessons in Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4, and in all in the sixth form. In English it is sound or good, and teachers have high expectations with good subject knowledge. In mathematics, teaching is at least sound, sometimes good, and the better lessons have pace, imagination and good organisation. In science, the majority of teaching is sound or better, with more good teaching in Key Stage 3 than Key Stage 4. Many lessons are active, with good variety, though some do not have these qualities and are too teacher controlled. In other lessons, teaching is often well planned and taught, with good pace and subject knowledge. Specialist teaching of students with special educational needs is generally good, sometimes very good, and teachers are well qualified to help the wide range of learning needs, giving particularly able help to students with hearing impairment and those in integrated studies. Many departments need to take further steps to provide work suitable for students of differing abilities and to develop their work in setting targets for students, to help them in each year of education and particularly in aiming for success in GCSE. The college needs to make homework a more useful extension of lessons and to mark it promptly and attentively.

11 The college curriculum provides adequate breadth and a good range of choice in the senior years. It has some drawbacks at present, though it meets national requirements in almost all respects, and is being reorganised for next academic year. The timetable is not at present serving the college well, and needs to be better constructed in terms of teacher allocation, lesson distribution and use of time.

### **Management and efficiency**

12 The college has a good set of aims and is well managed. The governing body fulfils its legal requirements and gives active, interested leadership and support. It is closely involved

with the daily life of the college. The principal gives warm, committed and effective leadership and generates an atmosphere of professional esteem and trust. This has enabled the senior management team to develop strongly and to make good links with the able leadership in departments and years. The senior team should further these links by encouraging the emergence of department development plans, well related to the college priorities expressed in the main college development plan. Such plans should include staff training needs identified in the light of department priorities. The assessment of students' work is an area requiring further strengthening in central policy and department practice. Regular management of the college is good and support staff give very good service, though management of the site and buildings needs more careful, creative attention, and the many health and safety issues identified during the inspection need immediate attention by the college and local authority. The college has some severe accommodation problems, and should collaborate with the local authority to produce an overall development plan, bearing in mind current deficiencies and indicated future growth.

13 Resources are managed efficiently, and the quality of regular financial planning is good. The governors' finance committee meets regularly and is well supported in its work by clear budget statements and forecasts. The college has planned to exceed its budget this year and has made plans to break even next year, with a prudent contingency reserve. There is some inefficient use of staff and time resources, and accommodation is not well presented. Overall, the college gives sound value for money, and good in many respects.

### **Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development**

14 Relationships in the college are very good. The college is a caring and generally orderly community which seeks to create opportunities for students to develop personally and socially. Though the college does not provide many opportunities for spiritual education outside religious education, or a daily act of collective worship, some aspects of the curriculum contribute to spiritual development. Responsible behaviour and attitudes are encouraged and moral issues discussed. Social development is a strong feature of the college, and there are many opportunities for students to take on responsibility and show initiative. The Duke of Edinburgh's award scheme is very well managed and supported, with a large number of students gaining awards, several at the highest level. Music, drama and sport are all strong, and there are many excellent expeditions and study visits. Outside Religious Education, the college does not foster an awareness of the many cultures which make up modern British society, and it needs to consider how best to approach this potentially rewarding issue.

15 Behaviour is good and students generally feel secure. They relate very well to the principal and senior staff, who provide good models of courtesy and respect. Attendance is generally good. The college cares well for its students and its pastoral system works well. Students are well known to their tutors, and parents are pleased with the help and guidance provided by the college. There is a comprehensive programme of personal, health and social education which is clearly structured and well taught.

### **Key issues for action**

16 The governors, principal and senior staff are already aware of many of the issues requiring attention. Further to raise the standards of work and the quality of learning and provision they should now:

- \*build on the good practice already existing to provide work suitable for students of all abilities;
- \*introduce a programme for the development of pupils' skills, across the entire college, particularly in writing and presentation, speaking and vocabulary work, number work and information technology;
- \*improve the quality of the college timetable to achieve better deployment of staff, distribution of lessons, allocation of time between subjects and the amount of time taught during the week, and to reduce time lost in transit between lessons;
- \*survey college accommodation to achieve a plan agreed with the LEA for the improvement of existing buildings and the provision of further necessary accommodation;
- \*improve the appearance of college buildings and grounds to provide a more welcoming atmosphere to reflect the students' growing pride in their college and further to support their self-esteem;



\*continue to develop promising initiatives in the following areas:

the assessment of students' work, to achieve good standards of assessment in all areas;

the college development plan, encouraging the emergence of related departmental plans and their usefulness in identifying staff training needs to meet common objectives;

the growth in setting academic targets for individual pupils, developing the tutors' role in support of pupils to achieve their targets;

the setting and marking of homework so that it becomes a profitable extension of pupils' learning in all subjects;

\*ensure that National Curriculum requirements mentioned in the curriculum section of this report are fully met;

\*provide a daily act of collective worship for all pupils;

\*attend to the health and safety issues mentioned in the subject, accommodation and welfare sections of this report.

## **Standards and quality**

### **Standards of achievement**

17 Tests taken by students on entry to the college show a regular pattern of overall achievement somewhat below the nationally expected level. There are more students with very low scores than is usual, and fewer who score very highly. However, there is a large number with scores just below and above the mean level, confirming a generally average situation if the lowest achievers are removed from the calculation. This happens to an extent in the GCSE examinations, where results should be near the national average. The whole ability range is present, including some very able students who go on to prestigious universities.

18 Standards in lessons observed at Key Stage 3 confirm achievement just below the nationally expected level, though students are making comparatively good use of their abilities, underachieving in relation to their own abilities in only a small number of lessons, and achieving highly in a third of lessons observed. In the 1995 tests taken at the end of Key Stage 3 in English, students were below the average score in national tests, but above in teacher set tests. In mathematics, they were exactly on the average in both tests, while in science they were some way below in both. These figures confirm that students have made a generally promising start at Key Stage 3, and should be capable of average success in GCSE if these standards are maintained.

19 Achievement is less promising in Key Stage 4. Here standards are below nationally expected levels in two fifths of lessons observed, and above in one fifth. In relation to their own abilities, students achieve appropriately in most lessons, with a smaller proportion achieving highly than in Key Stage 3. Results in GCSE examinations are below the national average in terms of the percentage achieving 5+ grades A\*-C; in 1995 the college achieved 33%, compared with the national average of 41%, and results are also below national figures in terms of 5+ A\*-G passes. However, GCSE results have improved over the last six years and the college is increasingly setting targets for individual students on the basis of their achievements in GCSE courses. Departments are also setting targets, and these are monitored with increasing accuracy, and with confidence that goals can be reached. The college aims to

reach the national average GCSE achievement in four years.

20 Achievement is good in English, where students make sound or good use of their abilities and achieve GCSE results well above the national average in English and Literature, and above in drama. In this subject, students achieve well in key skills and gain a foundation which should be extended to other subjects. A level achievement is good. In mathematics, students make sound use of their abilities, though GCSE results are some way below the average, and there is scope for improvement at this level. A level results, though, are good. In science, there is some underachievement in lessons at Key Stages 3 and 4, though this is appropriate or higher in the majority. In GCSE, standards are around the national average for individual subjects, but below for single and double award examinations. A level results are on or above the national average. In other subjects, GCSE results are below national levels, and A level results either on or above.

21 In the sixth form, standards are appropriate or high in relation both to nationally expected levels and to students' own abilities, in virtually all lessons. A level results rank among the best of Devon comprehensive schools, and increased markedly in 1995 to a points score above the national average. They were either on or above the national levels in all subjects, and well above in history. The college sets targets for A level students, with increasing success, advising them of predicted results on the basis of GCSE and sixth form course work performance.

22 Reading skills are at least sound and students make appropriate progress. They study challenging texts in English and often choose reading of good quality. Less able students read soundly, though they are sometimes held back for lack of help or appropriate material in class. Average students can read well enough to gain the information they need, in all subjects, and sixth formers read with good critical appreciation.

23 Writing skills are generally sound in English, with plenty of imaginative work and good redrafting of material. The ability range is very wide, though, and in Key Stage 4 there are some students who have not yet grasped the essentials of written communication. In other subjects, standards vary widely, and the lack of an agreed policy leads to inconsistency between teachers and subjects. Students can write acceptably when required, but do not otherwise write with natural care or accuracy.

24 Students are good listeners, though their speaking skills are underdeveloped in most areas except English and modern languages, where their skills are sound and they can express themselves adequately. Generally, they lack the confidence which leads to articulacy and sophistication, expressing themselves without enough range of vocabulary. In turn, this limits their powers of argument and analysis. The college provides many opportunities for students to take part in plays and performances, and works hard to enhance self-esteem in lessons and beyond. When students are given direct encouragement they often achieve very well, for example in the local public speaking competitions. The college should consider further ways to advance the speaking skills of all its students.

25 Some aspects of number work are good. These include sure use of calculators, though often at the expense of practice in basic number bonds, and confidence in basic number work is not high, either in mathematics, science or technology. There is good work, though, in geography. The mathematics department is soon to issue a useful workbook on calculation without a calculator. Students with special educational needs receive plenty of practice, developing their number skills strongly, and this continued practice is also needed by students of all abilities. Graph work and spatial awareness are generally good, though students lack understanding of graph construction in science.

26 Information technology skills are seriously underdeveloped. There is no separate information technology lesson in any year, and students' experience is limited by the amount of

equipment available and the limited development of information technology in many subjects. There is some excellent equipment in the technology department and one geography room, including the internet, and the college is recognised for its work with a weather satellite. Elsewhere, computers are in short supply, and specialist equipment is lacking, for example in art and special needs provision.

27 The college should introduce a key skills programme across all subjects for writing, speaking, number and information technology, so that students can enter Key Stage 4 with the confidence to tackle work at that level.

### **Quality of learning**

28 At Key Stages 3 and 4 the quality of students' learning is sound or better in the large majority of lessons, and in almost all in the sixth form. There are shortcomings in Key Stages 3 and 4 in one lesson in six. Few lessons of the highest quality were observed, but quality is good in over half of lessons at Key Stage 3, two lessons in five at Key Stage 4 and three lessons in five in the sixth form. These are good figures overall. In most subjects students' learning is positive, and marked by good attitudes and progress.

29 In English, learning ranges from sound to very good, and is marked by good collaboration and concentration and by good evaluation by students of their own work. Writing is lively and imaginative, and students work well in improving the quality of their presentation. In mathematics, learning is at least sound, often good, and students work confidently and industriously. They make good use of information technology in this subject. Learning sometimes has shortcomings at Key Stage 4, but in the sixth form is characterised by good attention to detail and insight into problems. In science, learning is sound or better in two thirds of lessons at Key Stages 3 and 4, and in all sixth form lessons. Good learning is marked by excitement and effective discussion; when it has shortcomings, students lack concentration and fail to retain information.

30 In all subjects, learning has many good features and few shortcomings. In technology, students join productively in lessons and often apply themselves well to problem solving. They are well motivated and cooperative in many history lessons, behaving well and taking responsibility for their own learning. In geography they have a good basis in subject skills which they develop well, and they make good progress in vocabulary and some aspects of grammar in modern languages, working with enthusiasm and concentration. They are well organised in art, working with purpose, pace and enthusiasm, while in music and physical education they collaborate in an open, friendly way, making progress as a result of their mature attitudes and behaviour. There are good discussions in religious education, and students make positive progress. Students progress well in sixth form vocational subjects, with considerable interest in their work and good cooperation with the teacher and each other.

31 Less able students make good progress when help is available, with considerable gains in key skills. In such lessons, they gain confidence and cooperate eagerly with the teacher. In other sessions, they find it hard to make progress when work is not suited to their abilities and help is not at hand.

32 Where learning has shortcomings, pace can sometimes be slow, and students then tend to drift away from the subject and chat about their own affairs. Work is quite often not well adjusted to the needs of all students, and this causes groups to lose concentration when they fail to understand the subject matter or find the task un motivating.

33 Students almost always enjoy making progress in skills specific to individual subjects.

These are practical, relevant and immediately useful. Their keenness to develop these skills is a mark of their good learning, motivation and behaviour, and makes many lessons positive, enjoyable occasions. Students are less keen to practise the basic skills of writing, presentation, speaking and number, and their information technology skills are underdeveloped. So while individual subjects and lessons reveal good progress in immediately relevant skills, these are not underpinned by the less exciting key skills which arbitrate success in examinations. The college should consider this issue and find ways to link students' good subject-specific skills to the basic key skills they need and often still lack at Key Stage 4.

## Efficiency of the school

34 The management of the college's strategic resources is conducted with increasing awareness of all the issues involved. The budget settlement for the current financial year posed great problems for the college, which had always chosen to maintain a high staff establishment and to keep class sizes small. A small overspend at the end of 1994-95 combined with budget cuts, the withdrawal of TVEE money and a temporary reduction in pupils numbers to create a serious problem. This was very well resolved with the cooperation of the local education authority (LEA), which authorised an overspend on the current budget, and the voluntary redundancy of six staff. To achieve this, much detailed cooperation between college, governors and LEA was required, and achieved. The college plans to break even in the coming financial year, and has budgeted to retain a planned contingency sum against any further difficulties.

35 Strategic management does, however, need continuing attention. Relatively small class size is maintained at the cost of higher than usual staff contact with taught classes, so that time for professional preparation, cooperation and development during the school day is less than in most similar schools. Though teaching staffing has been reduced, the effect of financial cuts and other factors has actually increased the percentage spent per pupil, and spending on support staff is comparatively high. To maintain these levels, resources for the academic departments have been much reduced this year, and though not yet a problem, will need to be increased again very shortly if current levels of books and equipment are to be maintained. The length of the teaching week is less than recommended, and should be increased.

36 The quality of regular financial planning is good, and ably controlled by the governors' finance committee and by two very experienced staff, the senior administrator and the finance assistant. The finance committee meets regularly and receives information of good quality about the current budget and future predictions. The college has attended to all the issues raised in the Keeping Your Balance questionnaire with the exception of some insurance matters which are currently being investigated. It has also addressed the detailed issues raised by the latest audit letter of June 1994.

37 The college's budget setting is not yet related to its development plan (CDP), though the plan has made financial effectiveness one of its current priorities. The CDP is a draft document at present, and contains a clear item in each section on resource implications, and the source of funding which will provide the necessary money. The CDP is well designed, but will need further consultation with staff to achieve a common sense of ownership and the necessary link with the developing department planning process.

38 Money is well spent, and the college takes care to check that it receives value for money. It carefully considers the costs of new staffing appointments, checks the value given by LEA and other contractors, and has recently developed some cost-effective, efficient ways of improving the school premises and grounds. It receives some £6000 a year from lettings, and the local charitable trust school fund committee and college parents' association make valued contributions. Staff resources are not at present used as efficiently as might be, as the timetable obliges a number of staff to teach outside their specialist fields and does not allocate lessons equitably through the week. Time is not therefore used to best effect, and this is further confirmed by the loss of lesson time in transit between certain lessons. Accommodation is fully used, but is not everywhere well presented or maintained, and many departments are split between more than one building. Resources for learning are generally well distributed and used, though the college lacks enough computers, and many subjects have almost no access to information technology.

39 In reaching a judgement about the value for money provided by the college, there are

many positive features in its favour. These include a sound education, good results at A level, many benefits from the extensive community programme, good social opportunities and good pastoral care. There are also some current reservations about strategic planning and resource use. Overall, the college gives sound value for money, and good in many respects.

## **Pupils' personal development and behaviour**

### **Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development**

40 The college is a caring and generally orderly community which seeks to create opportunities for students to develop personally and socially. Despite limitations of curriculum time the spiritual life of the college is well supported by religious education, which includes knowledge of faiths other than Christianity. Work in other departments, notably English and drama, music and social education also contribute. A college policy for the development of a spiritual dimension would help initiatives in this area.

41 Assemblies are held in each year group two or three times a week. Whilst a variety of social and moral issues is raised and time is sometimes set aside for reflection, assemblies are seldom acts of worship of a broadly Christian nature. The college does not, therefore meet legal requirements in this respect. However, one assembly observed was an effective act of worship, and positive student involvement was seen in another. The conditions in which some assemblies are held militates against creating feelings of awe and wonder which lie at the heart of developing spirituality.

42 The college is largely successful in its aims to encourage students to behave responsibly towards each other. Relationships between students and between students and adults are generally good. Consideration for the immediate environment could be improved but there is much evidence of concern for wider environmental problems and the issues which result whenever relevant, moral problems are discussed. There is a well planned programme of personal and social education in Key Stages 3 and 4, and in the sixth form. This is amply documented and includes appropriate elements for such a course. A number of other subjects make substantial contributions to students' moral development and good practice was seen in history, geography, science, religious education and English. The new Discipline for Learning project, in defining a code of behaviour, will enhance this aspect of life.

43 Provision for students' social development is very effective. Many opportunities exist for students of all ages to take on responsibility and show initiative. These include representation on year councils and committees, in assisting with Youth against Crime and acting as classroom helpers. Student involvement in administering the School Fund, many charitable activities and helping run the theatre illustrate the richness of this aspect of college life, while the extensive Activities week programme positively helps the development of younger students.

44 There is a range of extra curricular activities on offer during lunch times and after college with large numbers involved in music, drama and sport of all kinds. The enormously popular Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme generates many other activities. Educational visits at home and abroad add to students' cultural development. The college is aware of the need to reflect the cultural diversity of our society and expand the multi-cultural awareness of its students. Some helpful work in music, drama, art and religious education already takes place but greater awareness is generally required. The successful Community Education Programme gives many opportunities for personal development.

## **Behaviour and discipline**

45 The college is an orderly community overall. The behaviour of students in the classroom is good and supports effective learning. However the behaviour of students at breaks and lunchtimes and as they move around the site is not always satisfactory. There are frequent minor incidents of immature and disruptive behaviour, including pushing and jostling. With two sites and a large number of buildings, the college is difficult to patrol effectively and there are some areas where students may congregate undetected.



46 The staff handbook contains clear guidelines on the current system of discipline. There is a system of sanctions and a merit system is in operation. The emphasis is on encouraging students to develop self discipline and on praising students whenever possible. Students are aware of the sanctions and know what is expected of them, and most comply. Although there is some inconsistency in the application of the merit system, it is generally valued by students.

47 A working party has recently completed a review of the college's policies and procedures for discipline. After consultation with all staff, and with the agreement of the governing body, the college is to implement the "Discipline for Learning" programme from September 1996. The introduction of the new system is being carefully planned and supported by in-service training.

48 The college has a small number of students with emotional and behavioural problems. The Link Unit operates effectively to offer support to these students and enables a number of them to remain in mainstream schooling without disruption to the work of the majority. The Link is also used to help school refusers make a staged return to learning, and can offer short term help to others. The flexible provision offered by the Link makes a significant contribution to the quality of life in the college.

49 Students feel secure in the college and are therefore able to learn. Bullying is not a major issue. The college has a bullying policy and specific issues relating to bullying are addressed in the social education programme. Both students and their parents express confidence in the ability of staff to deal quickly and effectively with reported incidents of bullying.

50 The college offers a number of opportunities for students to exercise responsibility. Each Year Group has a council, with a representative from each form. There is no college council. The college might consider the role of a whole school council in developing a sense of community across the year groups.

51 The senior student scheme allows sixth form students to undertake a range of responsibilities which bring them into contact with younger students. This scheme has improved the quality of relationships between the sixth form and younger students, as well as raising their aspirations. Sixth formers may also be involved in helping members of staff in a variety of ways, and are responsible for running the community cinema.

52 Full records of exclusion are kept and procedures for exclusion are carefully followed. Forty two students were excluded for a fixed period, and four permanently, in the school year 1994/5.

## **Attendance**

53 Attendance is good, with the attendance rate being consistently above 90%. The great majority of students attend regularly. Registers are well maintained. The college complies with statutory requirements for recording and reporting attendance. The college takes a firm line on unauthorised absence and the rate is low. There are effective procedures for following up absences. In cases of persistent absence, the Educational Welfare Officer is appropriately involved. The college provides a wide range of support to the known cases of school refusers and school phobics and has a good record of successful re-integration into the full range of college activities. Sixth form attendance is good.

54 Punctuality to lessons is, however, a problem. Often students have to walk a considerable distance from one lesson to the next and there are frequent occurrences of lateness. It is not unusual to find students still arriving ten minutes after the scheduled start of the lesson and in some instances staff also arrive late. The school should consider the timing of

the school day to allow time for moving around the site.

55 Students do not conform fully to the system for reporting late arrival to college. There is a need to keep this system under review to ensure that it is consistently used. There are a few instances of students being in school but failing to attend all lessons, so staff are expected to keep a record of lesson attendances. Registers are called in most lessons. Students who do truant from lessons are quickly detected and the college monitors their attendance carefully.

## **Subjects of the curriculum and other curricular provision**

### **English**

56 In lessons observed, most students meet the national expectations and sometimes exceed them at all key stages. When students' abilities are considered, generally all students are achieving appropriately or well.

57 In Standard national tests at the end of year 9 students performed somewhat below the national average, though teacher assessments were closer to national figures. About 85% of the year group enter for GCSE English Language and Literature and have achieved results markedly above the national expectation of A-C passes. Next year almost all students will be entered for these examinations. The differences in performance between boys and girls reflect the national position in language, but in literature boys achieve better than national average. A-B grades at A level in 1994 were similar to national figures but in 1995 were substantially above.

58 Listening skills throughout the college are generally good. Students are able to communicate effectively in a variety of situations, but at Key Stages 3 and 4, they are not always fluent or completely confident. Vocabulary is not generally well developed. The department encourages drama and debating, though the drama department's formal role in Key Stage 3 speaking and listening could usefully be extended. In the sixth form, students have acquired these skills and are often very articulate.

59 Students' standards of reading are generally sound and sometimes good. Skills are extended by the challenging nature of some reading, particularly pre-twentieth literature, in all year groups and for all abilities. There is much lively and imaginative writing. The need for planning and redrafting are emphasised so final assignments are usually well presented. At times written expression does suffer from the rather limited vocabulary of some students. Spelling, punctuation and grammatical skills generally improve through the key stages. Sixth form students generally have good skills; they understand literary vocabulary, show some ability to analyse and understand the need for close textual reference. Most students have sound learning skills and some have very good ones. Students collaborate well in class and concentrate well. They are often able to evaluate their own work and gradually develop independent learning skills. Generally they enjoy their English lessons. Progress is evident within and between the key stages.

60 Teaching is almost always sound and much of it is good. Teachers have good subject knowledge, clear objectives and are well organised and hardworking. They use a variety of activities, some of which have problem-solving elements. Where teachers have very high expectations, lessons are particularly effective. A notable feature of the department is the good relations between staff and students.

61 Students' work is regularly marked with helpful and encouraging comments. The quality of the curriculum is good, particularly in the provision of pre-twentieth century literature. Information technology is taught to all year 7 students and to individual classes in other years, though all students at Key Stage 3 should be using information technology. Many topics and

texts studied give pupils the opportunity to discuss and think about a range of moral, social and cultural issues. The progress of SEN students is sound or better. They benefit from access to the full curriculum.

62 There are 14 teachers in the department, some teaching very little English. This adds to the problems of co-ordination and work load. There are also many classes shared between two teachers at Key Stage 3 and an unbalanced distribution within the week. There are some shortages of textbooks and resources need increasing both for books and further information technology teaching and access.

## **Drama**

63 Standards in lessons are generally sound in relation to national expectations and to students' own abilities. Students regularly obtain GCSE grades A\*-C significantly above the national average and all obtain a grade. A-B grades in A level theatre studies are generally close to national expectations though the 1995 results were disappointing. The strength of the department was shown in a fine production seen during the inspection, involving pupils from year 7-12. Students acted, sang and danced in the play which was directed, produced and managed by year 12 students. Students' learning skills are generally sound or better at all levels. They learn self discipline, are able to evaluate their work and be creative.

64 Teaching is usually sound. At best specialist knowledge is good, and lessons well prepared and organised. Where teaching is less satisfactory, classroom management is poor and activities do not challenge. Some teachers need further opportunities for support and training.

65 Students with special needs participate fully in drama at Key Stage 3 and some choose it as an option at GCSE. Generally these students make good progress. Drama makes an important contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the students.

66 The department, linked with the community cinema which the sixth form also helps to run, functions smoothly. The theatre itself is a very good amenity but does suffer from a lack of storage space. Most drama lessons take place in other areas which are unsatisfactory. However alterations are being made to Geneva Hall to improve its suitability for drama and other activities. Other areas should be reviewed and refurbished in the same way.

## **Mathematics**

67 At Key Stage 3 standards of achievement are in line with national expectations with regard to age and appropriate when considering students' ability. National test results match national averages exactly. Number bonding and associated processing of number are under-developed whereas spatial concepts and calculator use are good. Strategies for improving numeracy are well under way. Some excellent booklets to aid learning have been constructed and will be put into use after Easter. Further extension work of a challenging nature would be beneficial for more able students. Key Stage 4 standards need attention. Although most lessons observed are sound, GCSE results could be considerably higher. Underachievement is observed by some boys whose sharp deductive powers are restricted by indifferent working practices. More feedback, appropriate challenge and target setting is needed for these students. Sixth form standards are high. They show substantial improvement with a 100% pass rate in 1995. Good algebraic manipulation is evident as is excellent coursework. Although standards are satisfactory in retake classes, the irregular timetabling does not enhance teaching or learning and must bring a lowering of standards. Across the years information technology is used but, although some imaginative work is apparent (vectors, turtle graphics, multiples etc.), needs further development particularly in the light of statutory requirements at Key Stage 4.

68 At Key Stage 3 the quality of learning is at least sound, and often good. Students work confidently with the individualised commercial scheme. Generally they are on task, well-behaved and quietly industrious. They are happy to ask for help. The use of information technology to aid learning of such topics as vectors, programming sequences etc. is commendable. They reach for a calculator automatically which again is commendable providing adequate attention is given to mental arithmetic. At Key Stage 4 learning is generally sound, occasionally good and less than sound in just a couple of lessons. Some students are not achieving as highly as they might. A level learning is characterised by a high quality of attention and interest. Students exhibit strong algebraic, manipulative and deductive skills. Learning in resit GCSE classes is sound. but could be better if timetabling arrangements rationalised.

69 The quality of teaching at Key Stage 3 is at least sound, in many cases good and in one case excellent. Teachers have clear objectives and good powers of reasoning and description, though there is some unclear use of mathematical symbolism. Some exciting and imaginative work is attempted and is generally successful. At Key Stage 4 the quality of teaching is generally sound and occasionally good. Some teachers need to consider their approach to the commercial scheme so that students are able to use it effectively. The quality of teaching is good in A level classes. Staff draw from a wide mathematical experience and have sound analytical skills and subject confidence.

70 There are good arrangements for assessment, recording and reporting, but though there are examples of very good practice, marking and homework setting procedures are not consistent. Simplification of attainment target descriptors is necessary on coursework sheets. A comprehensive commercial scheme is effectively used across Key Stages 3 and 4. Both A level and GCSE retake classes follow recognised modular schemes. Provision for students with special educational needs is sound.

71 The Mathematics Faculty is competently managed by a realistic head of department who is well supported by those holding posts of responsibility within the department. Mathematics staff form a coherent team despite the great distance between some rooms. Some staff training is necessary in individual work schemes. Further updating of work scheme booklets is necessary.

## **Science**

72 This is a large and complex department which faces considerable challenges of scale and accommodation. Positive management, good target setting and increasing co-operation among its many staff is leading to improved results in lessons and examinations. At the moment achievements are below national averages in tests at the end of Key Stage 3, and in GCSE examinations, though they improved considerably in 1995, when the benefits of clear target setting for individual students were realised, and in some cases these targets were exceeded. A level passes reached or exceeded national averages, and S level results were also creditable.

73 In relation to national levels of achievement, students achieve appropriately or well in over two thirds of lessons at Key Stage 3, over a third at Key Stage 4, and in all sixth form lessons. In relation to their own abilities, achievement is appropriate or high in over two thirds of lessons at Key Stage 3, over two thirds at Key Stage 4, and in all sixth form lessons. Students are therefore making generally good use of their abilities, though this is less so at Key Stage 4. Knowledge of core science is fairly secure by the end of Key Stage 4, and students demonstrate this in good practical work, with well developed skills of observation often well deployed. There remains, though, some lack of understanding of major concepts at this stage,

and this, with some weakness in presentation, number skills and information technology, reduces effectiveness in GCSE. In the sixth form, students have a very good grasp of subject content and achieve good results by the able application of knowledge and skill.

74 The quality of student learning is sound or better in around two thirds of lessons in Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4, and in all sixth form lessons. Students often learn well, and in many lessons show real excitement and inspiration. They co-operate well, are active in practical work and group discussion where they can make relevant, effective contributions. They often enjoy their learning, and make good gains in knowledge and skill. In some classes, students find it hard to recall information and to concentrate on the matter being discussed.

75 The quality of teaching is sound or better in over three quarters of lessons at Key Stage 3, in two thirds at Key Stage 4, and in all the sixth form. There are many very good, interactive lessons, with activities well designed for the needs of differing abilities and with good reinforcement of content, variety and appropriate use of resources. Homework is often set effectively and marking is frequent, thorough and helpful. There are lessons, though, which are highly teacher-centred and reliant on worksheets, and where the good qualities described in this paragraph do not exist. The department has many problems not of its own making in terms of the college timetable, and many classes with several teachers, very large groups, and a lack of double lessons. The college should look closely at these issues so that a good standard of teaching is always available. At present, some teachers are facing as many as six hundred pupils per week, and it is not easy to provide a better level of instruction for some classes in such a situation.

76 The department is very well led, in difficult circumstances. Management of the head of science is proactive, with good communication, and gives an example of good practice which leads to a co-operative, positive atmosphere. Formal assessment is thorough and generally accurate, recording systems are appropriate, and reporting is satisfactory. The department is working towards consistent, constructive marking, with a very effective pilot scheme. Statutory requirements are met. Learners with special needs are well integrated, and support teachers sometimes achieve outstanding work. Staff are generally hard working, caring and competent, despite the pressures of heavy timetables and accommodation which is cramped, dispersed and often unsuitable. Specialist rooms are used in tutor group time and by unsupervised students outside lessons, and there is a number of health and safety issues which require attention. Overall, this is a hard working department with improving results and a well deserved reputation for initiative within the college, and which requires practical help in its staffing allocation and accommodation.

## **Technology**

### **a) Design and technology**

77 At all key stages the substantial majority of pupils achieve the national expectation, but some are below at Key Stages 3 and 4. Understanding of lesson aims is satisfactory to good, and pupils control resources appropriately in all areas, making products and following the design process well.



78 They work with confidence in a wide range of subject specialisms, including construction, electronics, graphics, and computer aided design, food and textile technology. Proficiency in drafting and methods of graphical presentation is below expectation for some pupils, as is the knowledge of the formal elements of design. At all levels most pupils are achieving appropriately for their abilities, with some achieving levels that are high for their abilities. They are using their individual strengths well and their co-operation in practical work is good. There is, however, evidence of some underachievement in some groups, at both Key Stages 3 and 4. This is largely due to the way in which the subject is presented, in a small number of lessons; and the lack of differentiation in lesson content. Students' manipulative skills, the handling of tools and knowledge of their use is largely good. Specifications and working drawing are used well, but design criteria and aesthetical considerations are insufficiently referred to. In 1995, GCSE Technology examination standards were below the national averages in all areas of the subject except in design, technology and automation where they were above average. A small number of students passed the Technology A level, but with low grades. Key Stage 4 design sheets are underdeveloped, considering the facilities available in the department for word processing, data base, spreadsheets, and computer assisted drawing and painting programmes. Function, safety, reliability and cost are considered, but proportion, balance and standards of finish are insufficiently addressed. Making and evaluating skills are largely good in all areas. Further work on examination criteria is needed for the GCSE groups. In all years much of the work in food studies and textiles is sound to good, and neatly and thoroughly documented by students.

79 At all stages learning quality is sound to good, but there are some concerns at Key Stages 3 and 4. The pace of progress and the development of understanding is largely satisfactory. Students' co-operation, perseverance, care and use of resources is good. At all key stages, understanding of design history and culture is under developed, and there is insufficient comparison with past technologies. Pupils' participation and productivity in lessons is a positive feature as is self and peer evaluation of work in progress. Problem solving and decision-taking processes are used appropriately to aid learning, but the lack of an immediate central learning resource is an inhibiting factor in the development of research and design skills.

80 At Key Stages 3 and 4 the majority of teaching is good, but there are a small number of shortcomings. Post-16 teaching is sound or better. The teaching style and classroom management is largely effective. The varied strategies make for motivation and interest. Work schemes are generally well thought out and related to industrial practice, providing a valuable understanding of construction methods and the properties of materials. Staff co-operation and team work is largely good, but team teaching is not used to any great extent. All strands of the National Curriculum are covered in the schemes of work, but some areas, such as structures and product application need further development.

81 Teachers' command of the subject is adequate to good. Teaching methodology and motivation of pupils is a strong feature of the best lessons. Differentiation through task is insufficiently used and careful review of subject delivery and work sheets is needed. Careful review of examination criteria and requirements is needed, together with greater emphasis on high standards of presentation and design. Further constructive comments in marking would aid learning. Feedback to pupils is sensitively handled and generally good. Homework is carefully set, marking is generally constructive and progress carefully monitored.

82 Management of the department is good, but connections with information technology in other curriculum areas and art, are insufficiently integrated. The control of equipment, storage and other resources, daily organisation and communications with other aspects of school life are good. Priorities for all technology areas have been established, and development plans are well considered and documented in the well presented and comprehensive handbook.



## **b) Information technology**

83 At Key Stages 3 and 4 some pupils achieve the national expectation but some achieve below it. In the sixth form most students achieve national expectation. Many students are unable to use the computers autonomously, and they are not fully aware of the ways in which information technology tools and information sources can help them in their work; they are unfamiliar with the software that the school offers. However, some are able to communicate and handle information well through word processing, spreadsheets, data bases, computer aided design and desk top publishing packages.

84 Many GNVQ students are critical users, and information technology is helping them in their work. The information technology GNVQ group is making good progress. Some information technology and computer work is carried out in most subject areas, except physical education, but the number of pupils involved is low. There is a developing understanding of the value of programmes and applications but many students do not have the opportunities to use the computers during lessons on a regular basis and therefore potential achievement is seriously reduced. However, the resource centre is available and well used outside lesson times.

85 The quality of learning has some good features and also some shortcomings at all three stages. Study skills are not being successfully developed in all years and the pace of progress and the development of understanding is slow. However, attitudes are positive, and there are some areas of good practice. Learning skills are not sequentially developed as subjects are not co-ordinated or information technology National Curriculum coverage monitored. The extent of independent learning and progress made by pupils is constrained by the lack of resources. Extra curricular work is not strong, and home use is insufficiently encouraged or developed. At present subject progression and continuity is not monitored across or through the key stages.

86 At Key Stage 3 the quality of teaching is variable. There are some shortcomings in important areas, and good features. At Key Stage 4 and Post-16 teaching is sound or good. The wide variation at Key Stage 3 is caused by limited time and resources and some lack of differentiation in subject delivery, also the unavailability of specialist staff. The shortcomings include inappropriate lesson content and unsuitable worksheets for age and ability groups. In the best lessons at Post-16 and Key Stage 4, well planned and presented activities make good use of the college's software. Teaching promotes good learning and there is appropriate pace and challenge, with sound command of the subject. Marking and recording systems need to be developed to relate to the schemes of work and the National Curriculum, to provide not only pupils coverage of the National Curriculum.

87 Cross-curricular provision is unco-ordinated and is not providing appropriate information technology education for all years. The National Curriculum requirements are not in place for all Key Stage 3 pupils. English, mathematics, humanities, design technology, modern foreign languages, science and music all contribute to the provision, but coverage is inconsistent. There are no designated staff co-ordinators. There is a steering committee, but meetings are only once or twice a term. Much discussion has taken place, but plans for the statutory year 10 provision in five months time are far from finalised. Various plans have been considered, and the school appears to be committed to a cross-curricular delivery as part of other Key Stage 4 subjects. Task differentiation is needed, especially in technology, where sophisticated drawing programmes are not appropriate for lower ability pupils. Support staff, and non-specialists, require further INSET in order to be more effective. Management of the subject is satisfactory in terms of the control of resources but not in terms of curriculum delivery, which has many shortcomings in terms of subject co-ordination.

88 The college needs to extend resources to make the subject available for all pupils, and

organise full implementation of the Key Stage 3 and year 10 National Curriculum, by September 1996.

## History

89 The majority of students throughout the college achieve standards equal to national expectations reflecting approximately their capabilities though there is a significant difference between the key stages. At Key Stage 3 just under half do not attain levels expected for their age and there is some underachievement by a significant number of students at this key stage. Although in lessons almost all students achieve the national expectation, in the last 2 years GCSE results grades A-C have been well below the national average for all pupils in all maintained secondary schools. In 1995 GCE A level results were well above the national average, particularly in the number of AB grades and there have been no failures at A level in the past 3 years.

90 At Key Stage 3 there is insufficient time to develop evidence based skills or adequately to discuss the issues raised and achievement is characterised by a superficial knowledge of the main events of the historical periods being studied. However, as students progress through the college they demonstrate an increasing depth of factual knowledge and can give explanations of historical events. They research well and are able to select and organise their information to answer historical questions in a variety of ways. A level students are articulate, can think for themselves and are able to make mature and balanced judgements.

91 At all stages, the quality of learning is almost entirely sound or better with many good features. Students are well motivated with positive attitudes to learning and have a good work ethic. They show respect for their peers and their teachers. Students behave well in class, are attentive and have well developed listening skills. Some learning skills, notably the extraction of information from text, are being developed in the lower school. Others, including acquiring the ability to analyse historical sources and giving explanations consistent with the evidence is developed more fully at Key Stage 4 and consolidated in the sixth form. At Key Stage 4 there is evidence of students taking responsibility for their own learning.

92 The quality of teaching is sound or better in the majority of lessons. At Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form it is sound or better in all lessons, the majority having good or very good features. Where teaching is good it is characterised by good planning with shared objectives, a suitable challenge for all students, good use of resources and secure subject knowledge. Where teaching is less satisfactory there is superficial delivery of subject content, lack of subject knowledge and failure to adapt classroom practice and use resources to meet individual student needs. Books are marked regularly and homework supports and extends the work of lessons. In some lessons, teachers are highly effective in achieving good standards in key skills. In others, achievement is very much lower.

93 The organisation of the curriculum has serious repercussions on National Curriculum programmes of study at Key Stage 3. The amount of time allowed for both history and geography, the different subject specific outcomes required, and the fact that each subject is taught in separate blocks of time so that for some weeks students receive no history teaching at all has a detrimental effect on achievement. This is not helped by the large number of non-specialist teachers who teach Key Stage 3 history. This is a cause for concern and needs to be addressed.

94 The department is efficiently administered, assessment procedures follow National Curriculum requirements, and the quantity and quality of resources are generally good.

## Geography

95 Overall standards are sound in all key stages. Achievement in GCSE at grades A\*-C

and at A level have been below national average over the last two years. However, the 1995 results showed improvement. Students read well, the best write competently but this skill is not as well developed. Students listen attentively, but oral contributions are brief and variable in quality. Number work is satisfactory. Information technology is impressively developed in some curriculum areas but further ways of improving access and use is necessary.

96 The quality of learning is sound or better in all key stages and is good in most lessons in Key Stage 3. By the end of Key Stage 3 students have a grounding in geographical skill and vocabulary. They are aware of spatial issues and have a grasp of global problems. Students are comfortable in using resource based learning techniques. At Key Stage 4 skills, knowledge and understanding are further developed. Students can explain a range of physical and human processes and apply analytical skills to their coursework. Sixth form students have a grasp of geographical concepts and their application in a variety of contexts and consolidate that work well in their individual study. Students are well behaved, attentive and interested.

97 The quality of teaching is sound or better at all key stages. Over two thirds of lessons at Key Stages 3 and 4 are of good quality. The teaching is characterised by clear aims, good planning, purposeful presentation, with tasks chosen appropriate for the purpose and student ability. High quality booklets aid teaching and a range of teaching strategies are employed. All specialist geography staff have a sound knowledge of their subject. However, no group discussions or independent investigatory work was seen. Teacher/student relationships are excellent and staff are caring and supportive.

98 The existing assessment policy needs revising to match National Curriculum level descriptions. In Key Stage 3 a tighter monitoring of the assessment is necessary. Key Stage 4 would benefit from a student work target programme based on completed unit assessments similar to that working successfully in the sixth form. Marking is regular and effective. A broad and balanced subject curriculum exists. Time allocated to geography teaching is inadequate in year 9 and comments in the history report about the organisation of the subject teaching time apply in geography also. Homework is regularly set and incorporated purposefully in teaching. Effective fieldwork is undertaken across key stages but levels are minimal and need increasing. Where classroom support is provided by the special needs department impressive progress is detectable in student learning. In Key Stage 3 differentiation of tasks caters well for student needs, but requires extending to Key Stage 4 where unevenness exists.

99 This is a well managed department with good team spirit. Appropriate arrangements exist for staff appraisal and the INSET policy for professional development is realistic. The core staff comprise 3 qualified experienced geographers but some 9 non-specialists contribute to the teaching of the subject in Key Stage 3. This policy needs review in the light of National Curriculum emphasis on the study of geography as a separate subject. A clerical assistant provides valuable support. The level of resourcing and funding is generally satisfactory except for the fieldwork budget which needs reviewing and the provision of supportive classroom texts to supplement the existing excellent Student Resource Booklets. Strong library links extend available resources. A high quality computer cluster linked to a satellite ground weather station enriches learning. Accommodation is good if at times confined. Each specialist geographer has a teaching base but blackout facilities are inadequate. Good quality wall displays in classroom and adjacent corridors enhance learning opportunities.

## **Modern Foreign Languages**

100 In lesson observed at Key Stage 3 half of the students achieve the national expectation and half fall below it. In relation to their ability all are achieving appropriate levels and some high

levels. At Key Stage 4 most achieve levels above the national expectation and the rest fall below it. In relation to their ability all achieve appropriate levels. In the sixth form all are achieving the national expectation or above and are achieving levels appropriate to their ability. Achievement in GCSE at grades A\*-C in French have been below national averages in recent years and were well below last year. Results at GCSE in German and at A Level in French and German have been above national averages.

101 At Key Stage 3 students handle various types of simple language, identify main points in texts and communicate with teachers, in pairs and in groups. They express simple opinions, describe themselves, others and simple events. Written work ranges from copying and note-taking to short letters. Some use grammar to handle more complicated language. At Key Stage 4 students produce longer texts, using a wider range of vocabulary and grammar. Overall few students take the initiative in speaking. In the sixth form students deal confidently with a wide range of texts and materials. They handle sophisticated language, research topics and some take the initiative in discussions.

102 Students' learning at all stages ranges from sound to mainly good. Where learning is effective there is evidence of progress in understanding and use of vocabulary and grammar, enthusiasm and consistent concentration.

103 Quality of teaching ranges from few shortcomings to mainly good at Key Stage 3. At Key Stage 4 it ranges from sound to mainly good. In the sixth form it is good. Lesson plans are generally thorough and the use of French or German ranges from sound to excellent. Pace is often brisk with some effective use of deadlines. In some lessons too much time is spent on presentation and too little on student-centred activities. At Key Stages 3 and 4 there is scope for a wider range of activities and choice of tasks and materials to suit students' differing needs.

104 Assessment is generally good, though there is still some inconsistency in marking and grading students' work and in target-setting by students. Access for all to a second foreign language is commendable but there is insufficient time in year 9 and in Key Stage 4 for the second foreign language. Arrangements for special needs are generally good but support overall is limited. Planning and documentation are good and the department shows considerable commitment and drive. Nonetheless, there is scope for further compromise over sharing of resources and expertise. The current level of funding is inadequate for the purposes of the National Curriculum. The quality of display of students' work is high despite the gloomy atmosphere of the accommodation. The split-site arrangement seriously erodes teaching-time. The department arranges effective work experience placements abroad and a programme of day trips and study visits.

## **Art**

105 In the great majority of lessons throughout the college most students achieve appropriate levels for their age and abilities. In some lessons many achieve high standards but there are a few lessons at Key Stage 4 in which a significant minority are underachieving. GCSE results show an improvement over the last two years although the number of students achieving A\*-C grades is below the national average. A level results show a consistent attainment of 100% grades A-E and last year the number of students achieving A-B grades was above the national average. Key Stage 3 students experiment effectively with a variety of media. They select and use tools and equipment appropriately. Observational skills are developed across the key stage. At Key Stage 4 students develop skills in the use of media which they select and use appropriately to express their ideas. Post-16 students handle processes and media with confidence and originality. There is an articulate expression of ideas both verbally and artistically. Throughout the college students work well together and

respect each other's ideas. References in work across the key stages show a developing awareness of the work of artists and the art of other cultures.

106 At all stages the quality of students' learning is always at least sound; in the majority of lessons it is good and for younger students it is very good in more than half. Key Stage 3 students work purposefully at a good pace. Enthusiasm is evident. There is progress in understanding the possibilities of media, form, sequencing and construction. Work at Key Stage 4 is generally purposeful and there is progress in design, skills and techniques. There are occasions when pace is undemanding, some students waste time and work shows little originality or attention to quality of finish. In most cases there is enthusiasm and an awareness of progress. Good use is made of reference material and folders show planning and preparation. Post-16 students are highly motivated and work at a good pace. There is increasing understanding of the possibilities and limitations of the media available to them as they develop their own artistic styles. Students at all stages organise themselves well and take increasing responsibility for their own work.



107 Quality of teaching throughout the college is always at least sound. In the majority of lessons it is good and in some shows outstandingly good features. Lessons are well planned. Work is well matched to students' interests and needs. Staff are aware of the wide range of ability in most groups; differentiation is effectively managed. They are secure in their command of the subject and able to offer effective demonstrations in a wide variety of media. Projects are designed to challenge and stimulate creative response. Throughout there is a high level of individual support to enable achievement. On occasion at Key Stage 4 pace is undemanding and there is an acceptance of less than adequate standards of effort or finished work. More usually there is a stress on standards and high expectations.

108 The department has a good policy for assessment and there is detailed marking with good feedback to pupils. Management is clear and effective, with good delegation of responsibility to subject teachers. Resources are effectively deployed, though the difficult problem of sharing equipment where art rooms are so far apart has yet to be resolved. Students with SENs are well supported and encouraged to achieve good results.

## **Music**

109 In lower school work, standards are below expectations in relation to similar schools. Standards vary, largely in relation to previous teaching and instrumental tuition experience. Standards are highest in year 7 and now rising. Instrumental and composing skills are not sufficiently developed; too little singing and listening occurs. Most students show limited general musical knowledge and understanding of written musical language. National Curriculum programmes are followed but there is insufficient time to teach the subject. In GCSE work, standards are approaching national expectations and in line with students' abilities. Recent examination results have been disappointing. In instrumental tuition, standards are average but rising; some students achieve high grades and numbers involved are below average but increasing. In extra curricular activities, standards in newly established groups are good; numbers and standards are rising rapidly.

110 The quality of learning for the younger students is mixed but generally sound. Students use a range of learning skills. In classroom work they enjoy organising their own work but do not always build on their previous experience or use their own instruments. They are well behaved, friendly, open, work well collaboratively and use equipment sensibly. Most remain on task when targets are attainable but time is not always used profitably. In GCSE work, learning is sound and students use computers competently. Students enjoy practical work and appraising music but dislike written tasks. The department is keen to further develop self-assessment schemes. In instrumental tuition and activities students are keen learners, enjoying high quality musical experience. They show mature attitudes and make good progress.

111 Teaching varies in quality at all stages but is generally sound, often good and sometimes excellent. In classroom work objectives are clear and teachers show good organisation and subject command. Teaching style is confident and supportive and staff use a good variety of presentational skills and visual aids. Generally there is rigour and pace, and expectations are high, if sometimes unattainable. Relationships are good but often work does not match the abilities or experience of the students. The programmes of study need to be refined to further develop performing and music reading skills to support work in singing, composing and listening, provide greater access to GCSE courses, instrumental tuition and activities. Students need to be stimulated, motivated and engaged at their own level, building on the practical work already taking place. At Key Stage 4 teaching, which shows the same qualities as in Key Stage 3, is sound and sometimes good but students need to sing, play and listen more. Instrumental teaching is of good quality with good liaison between instrumental staff and

the department. In extra curricular work high quality teaching reflects teachers' expertise and enthusiasm.

112 The departmental team is most competently led and is well supported by the growing numbers of musically keen students, staff and parents; their involvement does much to strengthen music. There is a well appointed main music room but accommodation lacks practice areas for group work. The department is poorly resourced and needs funding to improve the quality of music and books also to provide the necessary fully range of classroom instruments including full-sized electronic keyboards and quality tuned percussion. Decent recording facilities, audio equipment and additional computers are needed. Technical support for music is urgently needed. The department has good links with primary schools and is keen to develop these.

113 Instrumental tuition is taught by 6 visiting teachers; 28 boys and 60 girls receive lessons; numbers involved are about half those expected but are now rising steadily.

114 Extra-curricular groups are new, promising and include the lower school choir, orchestra, several ensembles and rock bands. These musicians are now playing an active part in school life and the community and bring much credit to this now forward looking and thriving department.

## **Physical education**

115 The standard of achievement of most pupils in relation to their age is appropriate or higher in relation to national expectations. When taking account of students' ability their knowledge, understanding and performance often exceeds the levels expected. Students are able to plan activities according to agreed criteria and adapt and refine skills which they perform in a variety of contexts. High standards of individual skills are exhibited in most activities, particularly in gymnastics and dance. Students demonstrate good evaluative skills. They are confident in discussion and are able to ask appropriate questions in order to clarify their understanding.

116 The quality of learning is at least sound and very often good. In all aspects of their work students are highly motivated and have a positive attitude towards the subject. Behaviour and discipline is good. Relationships are good and students work both cooperatively and competitively. They support each other in lessons and those with special needs are supported and encouraged to participate as fully as possible. They display great enthusiasm for the subject and derive much enjoyment from taking part.

117 The quality of teaching is at least sound and in the majority of lessons it is good or very good. All lessons are part of schemes of work which meet the needs of the National Curriculum. The arrangements for assessing and recording achievement are generally effective, but there is a need to develop this process to promote higher standards and influence future planning. The department needs to produce a development plan which indicates clearly the direction in which it is going and which demonstrates appropriate progression within the curriculum provision. Given the interest in the subject, the school might explore the possibility of offering GCSE in physical education to its Key Stage 4 pupils. Lessons are purposeful, orderly and physically demanding. The quality of teaching has a positive impact on the progress made by pupils and on their enjoyment of the subject.

118 Teachers give very freely of their time to provide a very wide range of extra-curricular activities. Many pupils from across the whole age range take part in school clubs, inter-house and inter-school games. There is opportunity for pupils to take part in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme, skiing trips abroad and many other activities related to physical education. The school has had many pupils representing the district and county in sports competitions. The facilities for physical education includes a gymnasium, fitness room, sports hall, good playing fields and tennis courts. However there is a need for the netball courts to be resurfaced. The time allocation for the subject is adequate for the pupils satisfactorily to cover the requirements of the syllabus.

119 The department is well led and effectively managed. The staff have a good knowledge of their subject, work well together and show a very strong commitment to the pupils.

### **Religious education**

120 Standards of achievement at GCSE have been below the national average in recent years. At advanced level, although numbers are small, almost all candidates have been successful. Achievement in lessons at Key Stages 3 and 4 is below the national expectation for students of that age although most are performing up their ability and some beyond it. In the sixth form standards are good. By the end of year 9 most students are beginning to understand the variety of religious experience, to recognise religious symbols and to use technical terms. In the middle school and sixth form students are exploring moral and spiritual values and relating them to every day life. They can enter freely into debate on quite complex issues and produce sound essay and course work.

121 At Key Stage 3 learning experiences are generally sound or better. Lively discussion results in satisfactory outcomes and progression in knowledge and understanding, though there are instances of an over emphasis on practical activities at the expense of more rigorous differentiated tasks. Learning at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form is sound or good. However, the short GCSE course in core religious education suffers from insufficient time to do justice to the willingness of students to learn and undertake independent research.

122 The standards of teaching is sound or better in the majority of lessons. This is characterised by good discourse and discussion. Clear aims, sound planning, pace and timing, the use of artifacts and audio visual materials stimulate learning. When lessons are less successful there is an over reliance on textbooks, lack of variety of experience and homework of dubious value. Good relationships and discipline help the sound teaching of the subject. Greater use of differentiated texts and materials and the expansion of investigative work is needed to enhance existing good practice.

123 The curriculum is based on the Devon Agreed Syllabus. A sound system of assessment is in place. The department is well managed and has succeeded in producing a large amount of valuable documentation in this, its first year as an independent subject. Resources are adequate and well used but insufficient to meet students' needs. All classes are taught in mixed ability groups; teachers cannot always do justice to the needs of the less able owing to lack of additional teacher support. The time allocated to religious education at Key Stage 3 is below that recommended by the Devon Agreed Syllabus and sufficient only to permit a basic teaching of the attainment targets. At Key Stage 4 also the time allowed for core religious education is not sufficient. The college also need to review the teaching of the subject in the sixth form to ensure that it is meeting statutory requirements.

## **Factors contributing to these findings**

### **Quality of teaching**

124 At Key Stages 3 and 4 the quality of teaching is sound or better in the large majority of lessons, and in virtually all lessons in the sixth form. Quality is good or very good at Key Stage 3 in three lessons out of five. At Key Stage 4 there is more which is sound, with half of lessons being good and few very good. There are almost no sixth form lessons of the highest teaching quality, but quality is good in three lessons out of five. These are good figures, and the quality of teaching has a positive effect on the standards of achievement and the quality of the students' learning.

125 In English, teaching is sound or good at all key stages. Teachers have clear objectives, subject knowledge and organisation, with high expectations and good assessment of work. In mathematics, teaching is at least sound, often good at Key Stage 3 and sometimes good at Key Stage 4. It is good in the sixth form. Teachers have wide experience, clear objectives and sound analytical skills, often teaching with pace and imagination. In science teaching is sound or better in three lessons out of four at Key Stage 3, in two out of three at Key Stage 4 and in all lessons in the sixth form. Teachers have wide experience, clear objectives and sound analytical skills, often teaching with pace and imagination. There are many interactive lessons, with good variety and reinforcement of skills. There are also some which lack variety and are too teacher centred. Homework is often not well set or work adequately corrected.

126 In technology, teaching is often varied and effective, with adequate subject command, though lessons can fail to cater for the range of students and marking can be unhelpful. History and geography teaching are marked by good planning, secure subject knowledge and clear aims when taught by specialist staff. Language lessons have good planning and pace but sometimes lack sufficient student activity, and work well adjusted to the needs of all students. Art lessons are well planned, with good subject knowledge, though pace sometimes falters at Key Stage 4, where low standards can be too readily accepted. In music, teaching has clear objectives, with good pace and very high expectations. Teaching is purposeful, orderly and positive in physical education, with teachers giving generously of their time to a wide range of activities. In religious education, teachers have good aims, planning and pace, though there is too much reliance on the textbook and unhelpful setting of homework. Vocational subjects are well taught, with good challenge and an intellectual capacity which directly raises standards. Some lessons, though, lack this challenge and sense of engagement.

127 There is already much good practice in providing students with work well suited to their differing abilities. For example, teachers in the SEN department work with subject staff to provide useful material. This expertise is unable to reach many areas, though, and there remain a large number of subjects and lessons in which work is not thoughtfully presented to the full ability range in any one class. Subjects in which differentiation should be improved include mathematics, science, technology, information technology, history, geography, languages and religious education. The college is aware of the need to improve the position.

128 Overall, lesson planning is effective. Schemes of work are well drawn up, but often lack sufficient provision for the different learning needs of all students. There are many instances where homework is not well set and marked and where teachers are not using homework as a good means of extending the time available for study of the subject. Further improvements are needed in this area. Teachers' subject knowledge is good, but the present allocation of staff to subjects involves too many in teaching outside their specialist areas. Teachers' expectations of students are appropriately high at Key Stage 3 and the sixth form, and the increasing practice of target setting will help the match between expectations and ability at Key Stage 4. The college has made good progress in identifying staff training needs, and now needs to encourage the production of department development plans which clearly indicate training needs and arrangements to meet priorities declared.

### **Assessment, recording and reporting**

129 Bideford College's policy on assessment, recording and reporting is clear and concise, and is supported by similarly clear, concise policies on homework, monitoring progress, reports, and records of achievement. In general, the details of implementation (and the development of marking policy) are left to the individual subject areas, though senior management is active in its explicit role in monitoring progress. This insistence on central monitoring partly follows the college's intention further to hone the systems for assessing added value and to develop a detailed central policy.

130 Areas vary in how far they have progressed along the road to comprehensive and consistent assessment; only for learners with special needs has that process effectively been completed. Nearly all subject departments have a policy, and all are consistent and thorough in providing and recording formal and statutory assessments. There is, however, no policy and no assessment for National Curriculum information technology. As the college has delegated these details to departments, there are issues of potential inconsistencies in practice and outcomes that central monitoring needs to address further. For instance, one department may assess only factual recall, whereas another may concentrate on relevant skills; also a "C" for

effort in one subject may differ significantly in meaning from a "C" in another.

131 Marking of class and homework varies greatly; it is fully consistent only in the cases of English, art, music, physics, and religious education, and adequately accurate only in art, modern foreign languages, and physics. Otherwise, while there can be very good practice, there can also be infrequent and unhelpful marking. The latter, in not informing the students as to how they can improve progress and overcome problems, does nothing for the quality of teaching and of learning.

132 The college sends a detailed annual report and "monitoring" letters home for each student; both involve an element of self-assessment. The monitoring letters are annual at Key Stages 3 and 4, and termly post-16. Some parents and staff have expressed concerns as regards the level of helpfulness of the reports; those at Key Stage 3 have been improved and the college is reviewing format and content for Key Stage 4 reports and consulting with parents about their design. The college Record of Achievement (ROA) scheme is well developed. ROA material is transferred from primary school, and the college maintains ROAs of a high standard. These are used throughout the college, and some employees have commented warmly on them.

133 The college as a whole, and some departments, are moving at speed towards the effective use of assessment data in improving performance by target-setting. Again, there is some good practice, and the impact on achievement can already be seen.

## **The curriculum**

### **Quality and range of the curriculum**

134 The college is aware of the need to revise the curriculum, and plans have been considered and agreed for next year. The present curriculum is generally broad and well balanced in terms of subjects offered, and the curriculum within each subject, while the needs of less able students have been considered. The college aims to give every student the best possible education. At present, the curriculum and its presentation by way of the college timetable and departmental schemes of work cannot be said to achieve that aim in the most effective manner.

135 The curriculum follows local authority guidelines and meets the needs of the National Curriculum in almost all respects. At present, teaching time is less than that recommended, both at Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4.

136 At Key Stage 3, teaching is based on tutor groups in Year 7(Y7), and students are therefore in mixed ability classes. Setting is introduced for a number of subjects as from Year 8, and by Year 9 only English, tutorial guidance and personal and social education (PSE) remain in mixed ability groupings. Information technology is not taught separately in any year, and the college has not so far been very successful in its policy to teach information technology in all subjects. Religious education has less time than recommended, while art has over twice that of music. History and geography are taught alternately in shared time, with consequent discontinuity for each and a lack of sufficient time overall for both. Almost all students take a second foreign language in Year 9, but time is insufficient in this year to teach both adequately. The needs of less able students are well catered for, both in the basic mixed ability structure for the earlier years, in withdrawal to individual tuition, and the work of special units.

137 At Key Stage 4, there is generally sufficient time for the common subjects, and a good choice of subject options. Religious education and social education are taught in shared time,

but this is not sufficient for either. At present, a second foreign language is offered in lessons timetabled after the college day, but the timing is correctly to be revised next academic year. Arrangements for science are complex, with separate subjects being taught as well as combined science for single and double award. The needs of less able students are well considered, especially in the provision of a very successful integrated studies course, and other suitable courses are being considered.

138 In the sixth form, there is a good A level curriculum, with some sixty students each year. There is also a successful and expanding vocational studies programme (see below) with over fifty students taking General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) intermediate certificate courses, and some twenty five taking GNVQ advanced. Twenty five combine A level and GNVQ courses. There is a general studies programme, but no religious education provision at this level.

139 In drawing up plans for revision to the curriculum, the college should ensure that National Curriculum requirements for information technology are met at all stages, and that recommended time is given to religious education, also at all stages. It should also consider the comments above with reference to time given to other subjects and arrangements for humanities and science teaching.

140 The realisation of the curriculum in terms of schemes of work, timetable construction and homework requires some attention. Generally, schemes of work are well presented, and give evidence that the full National Curriculum experience is planned. The quality of these documents varies both between departments and teachers, and they do not often make clear how work is to be provided to meet the needs of differing abilities. Departments need to produce clear procedures for review and evaluation of schemes of work, with guidance and training from senior management. Timetable construction needs improvement. There are too many classes with more than one teacher and lessons unevenly distributed in the week. There are also far too many teachers taking a few periods outside their specialist areas. Lessons do not begin early enough, as much time is taken in meetings and assemblies, and there is consequently no time to provide interval between lessons, desirable in a split site college where much time is lost in travel. Time for the present curriculum is already low, and with some ten minutes commonly lost in certain lessons, profitable teaching time is much lower than desirable. The quality of homework is variable, and more work is needed to ensure that departments make best use of this, both in the regularity of homework set and in the quality of the tasks given. At present, not all subjects and teachers make good use of this opportunity to extend the time available.

141 There is a good programme of extra-curricular activities. For example, there are theatre visits and drama productions, and the college community programme provides many valuable ways to extend the curriculum, for college students and for their families. The college theatre and cinema is a good example of community education enriching college life, as are the numerous links and contacts which the community programme offers. There is an active sports programme, with many matches and other activities, and good use is made of the countryside. There is a good field study programme, and visits to France and Germany, where sixth formers can undertake work experience as an extension to the extensive work experience programme in Key Stage 4. There is a number of clubs and societies, and the sixth formers support the curriculum by becoming staff assistants and helping in lessons through the senior students scheme. The active Duke of Edinburgh and Young Enterprise schemes provide many opportunities to extend the curriculum. The annual Activities Week is a major event in which many aspects of the curriculum are enlarged and enjoyably developed.

142 The governing body discharges its responsibilities for the curriculum through its curriculum committee, and gives positive, interested leadership and support. It should consider the issues discussed above and find ways to review the progress made by the college in addressing them.

### **Vocational courses**

143 GNVQ is a relatively recent addition to the sixth form curriculum. It is currently available at intermediate level in business, health and social care, information technology, leisure and tourism, and manufacturing, and at advanced level in business studies. Students and staff are rapidly getting used to the distinctive ethos and methodology of GNVQ with its quite different approach to study. Numbers of students completing the course compare favourably with the national norm. GNVQ is effectively managed and administered within the college, and students are beginning to understand and take advantage of the opportunities it provides for progression. GNVQ has been adequately resourced and there is good access to information



technology.

144 The college curriculum includes economics and sociology at A level and business studies at GCSE level. In most of the lessons inspected, standards of achievement in economics and sociology are sound or better in terms of national norms and the students' ability. Quality of learning in classes is good with well motivated students arguing through a range of issues. In some others, delivery does not sufficiently engage or challenge the students. Quality of teaching is mostly sound or good with students appropriately stretched. Business studies at GCSE level is a popular option. Standards of achievement in the lessons observed are sound in terms of both the students' own abilities and national expectations. There is good access to information technology which enhances quality of learning. Quality of teaching is sound, but it is a matter for concern that most of the classes in business studies in year 10 are taught by non-specialists.

145 In these areas, assessment recording and reporting are in accordance with college and, where appropriate, course policies. Management and administration are sound, and students are mainly enjoying appropriate academic stimulation. GNVQ is expanding in a planned way; the introduction of foundation courses in Key Stage 4 would enhance the curriculum for years 10 and 11, and also increase the opportunities for progression. Business studies and economics could have closer links to their mutual advantage.

146 Students in these areas are being well served by the college. Judicious further development would continue to enhance these opportunities.

### **Equality of opportunity**

147 Equal opportunities for all students to achieve success are implicit in the College Charter. The policy in the Staff Handbook explains how equal opportunities should be implemented. However, there has been no recent monitoring of the policy, though there is evidence of good practice in most subject areas, and evaluation of college practice should now be undertaken. The achievement of boys and girls is carefully monitored in order to raise performance generally.

148 Overall, there are rather more boys than girls within the college except in years 8, 11 and 13. Students have equal access to all subject areas, although within subjects there are some differences. There are some gender imbalances in groups of students setted by ability, and in Key Stage 4 option choices. There is no evidence that these imbalances affect learning adversely. Gender issues are recognised and there is good practice in some subjects.

149 The organisation of the timetable constrains choice in various ways. For example, there is insufficient curriculum time for a second foreign language in Key Stages 3 and 4 (though the access is possible in year 9); and the GCSE electronics option is limited to one of the two student groups only in year 10.

150 The SEN department contributes significantly to the provision for less able students but it is less well developed for the more able. Departmental practice regarding differentiation needs to be strengthened in some subjects. Support for the hearing impaired unit is excellent and these students participate fully in many activities, for example by signing and singing in a school concert.

151 There is no wheelchair access within the school except to the school theatre.

152 The few students from ethnic backgrounds are well integrated within the college and some departments, notably music, art and religious education, contribute a greater awareness of multicultural issues.

153 There is an equal gender balance within the staff but men significantly outnumber women in positions of responsibility. The college meets in full its legal requirements.

### **Provision for pupils with special educational needs**

154 The college has a new special educational needs (SEN) policy which has been ratified by the senior management team and is currently being considered by the governing body. The college has 313 students on its current SEN register; 81 of these have statements. Most of the students on the register have learning difficulties which range from mild through moderate to significant. There are 32 students who have emotional and behavioural difficulties. There is a small number of hearing impaired students, some visually impaired students and some are on the register for medical reasons. 14 students in year 7 are on the register because they have been identified as gifted. All of these pupils have access to the college curriculum including all subjects of the National Curriculum, with some minor modifications in a few cases.

155 There are 10 (8.5 FTE) teachers working with the SEN department and the team is effectively led by an experienced and well qualified SEN co-ordinator (SENCO). Four of these teachers each have special responsibility for a particular aspect of the SEN provision within the college. One has responsibility for arrangements for all statemented students, teaching within a unit those students who are extracted from normal lessons, and negotiating the timetable for those teachers and classroom assistants who provide support for SEN students within classrooms. A second provides support in a special unit for students extracted from year 7 classes with an emphasis on the development of individual skills of literacy and numeracy. Another organises the support, mainly by classroom assistants, for hearing impaired students within the mainstream classes and the SENCO himself has responsibility for organising provision for students with emotional and behavioural difficulties. These units are effectively managed and the committed contribution of all those involved in their work has a positive and beneficial effect upon the quality of learning, standards of achievement and the social, moral and cultural development of the students. The standards of achievement of the great majority of students with SEN is commensurate with their abilities and many achieve levels which are high for their abilities. The quality of teaching provided by SEN staff is rarely less than sound and much of it has good features, some of them outstanding. The quality of learning is also mainly sound or better sometimes with very good features.

156 The progress and standards of achievement of some SEN students at Key Stage 4 who choose to join an integrated studies course (humanities and science), and some who are in low ability English groups are especially notable and reflect the excellent quality of teaching and learning and the relationships between teachers and students.

157 Procedures with regard to statementing and reviewing are well organised and carried out in accordance with the Code of Practice. Outside support agencies and parents take part in the procedures. There is a good match between the provision outlined in the statements and Individual Education Plans and that actually made.

158 The school does its best to provide as much in class support as possible for statemented pupils but there are parts of the curriculum where support is very limited, especially at Key Stage 4 and the college should further review the sufficiency, nature and deployment of support staff who work in classrooms.

159 The support for hearing impaired students in mainstream classes is excellent, and most

students with SEN in years 7 and 8 are also well served. All students at stage 2 or above in Key Stage 3 on the SEN register have Individual Education Plans (IEP) and subject staff are informed about these; the SEN department is aware of the need to provide IEPs for the remaining students in years 10 and 11 who are entitled to them.

160 Some SEN staff work with subject staff to provide some excellent differentiated learning materials and some teachers are attempting to provide differentiated teaching and learning experiences, however the effectiveness of these measures varies considerably from subject to subject and from teacher to teacher and there is a need for further staff development in the area of differentiated teaching and learning methodologies. The department is aware that an important area which needs further development is the provision for more able and gifted students.

161 Each member of the SEN department staff is attached to a subject department and there is a nominated teacher in each subject department who has the responsibility to liaise with the SEN department. Cross curricular committees meet regularly to discuss SEN issues and identify priorities. The SENCO chairs a cross phase committee and has built up good working relationships with local primary schools. There is a well established induction programme in place. Assessment of students is well organised and efficiently carried out.

162 The SEN department is reasonably well resourced and departmental accommodation is good. Funding for pupils with SEN is efficiently used and arrangements for monitoring are in place. There is a need to increase the availability of computers and to develop the use made by students of information technology.

163 The department has built up good relationships with outside agencies, including psychological services, social services and police. The department also has close contacts with the North Devon Special Needs Consortium.

## **Management and administration**

164 The college has one main aim expressed in its charter, 'to provide the best possible education for every member of the college'. The charter helpfully divides responsibility for achieving this aim between teachers, parents and pupils, allocating responsibilities for each body. Though by their nature, these responsibilities can never be wholly fulfilled, the college should carefully reexamine them to see how it can best help each body in working towards its goals and how progress might be jointly evaluated within the College Development Plan (CDP).

165 The governing body fulfils its legal responsibilities and gives active, interested leadership and support. It has five committees, each well supported by a member of the senior staff, and with clear minutes of proceedings. The chairman meets weekly with the college principal and takes a close interest in all aspects of development. governors have two representatives on the college's senior management team, and through them are closely linked with college work.

166 The principal, who has been in post for two years, gives warm, committed and effective leadership. He has good relationships with governors, staff and senior team, and generates an atmosphere of professional esteem and trust. Under his leadership, the senior management team has developed into an effective forum for improvement, and links with the heads of subjects and years are increasingly fruitful, with several college policies now starting to improve common goals and standards. Leadership given by heads of subject and years is good, and communication positive. All staff now need to unite under the well directed leadership of senior and middle management, so that the benefits of well chosen policies can fully be realised for the advantage of all staff and pupils.

167 The CDP has reached a promising stage of development. It is in draft at present for 1996-7, and has correctly identified student attainment and behaviour, pastoral development and the evaluation of financial effectiveness as the main elements for the new plan, now readjusted to coincide with the financial year. The college intends to incorporate further items arising from this report, so that the CDP will be a document able to take the college forward in the longer as well as the shorter term. Department plans (DDPs) are not yet evenly well developed, and the college should now extend its work to the creation of these, to unite all areas in the pursuit of common goals and give scope for departments and years to develop and evaluate their own targets derived from CDP priorities. Not all departments are yet identifying staff training priorities to meet overall college aims, and this should be one of the prime intentions for the improved DDPs.

168 The college is at an early stage in formulating many of its central plans, but has developed very promising approaches to overall college and individual student target setting. It has recently agreed a new approach to student discipline, with the involvement of all staff, and plans are increasingly discussed by department and year staff, with well conducted full staff meetings to bring staff together in the consultation process. Plans to improve the effectiveness of assessment, homework and tutorial guidance in student target setting are among those needing further development in this strengthening process.

169 The regular management of the college is well planned and carried out. The senior administrator ably directs all support staff, who give very good service both in central administration and support of departments and other areas of the college. Communication among staff is generally good. Overall management is good, and increasingly effective.

## **Staff, learning resources and accommodation**

### **Teaching and non-teaching staff**

170 There are 92.6 full time equivalent teaching staff. Although the pupil-teacher ratio is in line with other comprehensive schools, the contact ratio is high and the size of classes generally low. This is in some respects a good arrangement, though it limits time within the college day for preparation and professional contact.

171 There is a strong competition for most posts and the college is able to make new appointments of good calibre. Though staff are well deployed in some areas, the current timetable means that in others staff are not well deployed and that the quality of teaching suffers. For example, there are eleven teachers of history in Key Stage 3, partly because of the block nature of the humanities timetable at that stage, and this problem affects geography and religious education also. In science, some classes have three teachers, and subject specialisms are not well balanced within the department. English has many teachers and split classes and there is a number of split classes in languages and business studies also. There are instances of lessons unevenly distributed through the week, so that regular teaching and homework setting suffer; combined with the number of split classes, the effect is detrimental to students' standards of work. This is unfortunate for the many staff of very good calibre, well qualified and experienced, whose professional effectiveness is thereby lessened. It is also

unfortunate that students' education suffers from a pattern of staff absence in two subject areas. The college should address these issues.

172 Teaching staff are effectively managed. There is a staff development committee, with governor membership, which considers development issues and allocates funds for training. Departments are aware of training opportunities, though funds are not extensive. A senior member of staff assists with setting targets and training for teachers who need particular help. Appraisal is up to date and progress well recorded on a central record. As yet there is no link between appraisal, department and individual development, and a working party is to consider possibilities. Department development plans are not yet well advanced, and further work on these should include the linking of development issues and training. Full staff training days are generally well used, and staff have devised workshop sessions to meet their own needs. Job descriptions are satisfactory, but in some cases need revising.

173 There is a generous support staff establishment. Administrative staff give very good service, and departments are well served by technical and secretarial support. The work of support staff is reviewed by the senior administrator, though an appraisal scheme for support staff has not yet been considered.

## **Resources for learning**

174 The system of the allocation of capitation to subject areas is based on a weighted formula relating to the number of lessons taught within a department and this is seen as fair by most subject areas. The sum available for capitation is set and monitored by the governors' Finance Committee. Subject departments have sufficient access to resources to deliver the National Curriculum. With the exception of modern foreign languages, music and science, textbook supplies are currently adequate.

175 The pupil-computer ratio of 15:1 is well below the national average, and these resources are spread around the site. There are 3 centralised areas, within the technology area, in the learning resources centre and in the mathematics department. Mathematics and technology and sixth form GNVQ students use these areas but the available booking system for excess capacity is little used by most departments. Other subject areas with the exception of English and geography which have several machines, are mostly equipped with a single computer. There is a need for the increased use of information technology in the teaching of the curriculum and a policy for information technology across the curriculum is required. The dispersed teaching accommodation for some subject areas is preventing the sound deployment of resources for learning. The quality and condition of resources are generally good.

176 The library, which is also a community library, plays an effective role in supporting standards of achievement and quality of learning. It is well used by students who borrow books on a regular basis and most departments make effective use of its facilities. It is well staffed and is open throughout the school day and for some time after. The satellite learning resource centre provides good information technology services for both staff and students, having 15 computers with shared printing facilities, good software provision and access to the Internet. The college has, in addition, an excellent theatre, a music suite and good sports facilities.

177 Use is made of out-of-school resources to enhance student learning. These are visits to

the theatre, museums, local beaches and countryside as well as sports fixtures and field trips. The college has an appropriate charging system that ensures equality of access to curricular activities outside the classroom.

## **Accommodation**

178 The accommodation at the college is just adequate for existing student numbers. However, the college will be unable to accommodate the projected increase forecast in the number of students over the next four years within the current amount of accommodation, and governors have acted prudently in requesting a reduction in the planned admission limit to 266 students per year group.

179 Efficient use is made of the available accommodation. Room use is high at an average of 86%, and 72% of the accommodation is in use for more than 87% of the time. In some subject areas, for example science and technology, there is insufficient space to accommodate larger group sizes. Some specialist classes are taught in non-specialist classrooms.

180 While some subject rooms and facilities are grouped together, others exist in more than one building or on more than one site. This creates difficulties in some areas for collaborative work and efficient use of resources. The split site also makes the effective use of the resource centre and the library difficult for some subjects.

181 The college has no hall large enough to permit an assembly of more than one year group. This leads to a lack of corporate identity and makes the work of the staff to create a whole school ethos harder. The majority of the accommodation has an air of neglect. The college should explore ways to improve its appearance, so that students and staff can take a pride in their environment.

182 In science, music and art, the quantity and quality of the accommodation has a negative effect on quality of learning. Where students have access to the theatre, facilities for drama are good, but the other teaching areas used are unsatisfactory. Facilities in physical education are good. In most other subject areas the quality of accommodation is variable and in some cases has a negative impact on the quality of learning. The conditions in both canteens are very cramped and there is insufficient area of playground, both of which factors have a negative effect on the social aspects of school life.

183 The college has two sites. The main college buildings occupy the Abbotsham Road site. The Geneva building is two streets away and the games pavilion and fields are ten minutes walk away. Large numbers of students regularly walk between the main site and the Geneva building. This necessitates crossing two residential, two-way streets both of which are full of parked vehicles and neither of which has any form of pedestrian crossing. There are yellow zig-zags at the entrance to the main site only. The college works to ensure that students cross the roads with due care and attention, but this is not always the case and the situation gives rise to concern.

184 The college has no policy for display. Displays of students work around the school and in classrooms are of variable quality. Display space is poor in some rooms and areas and is poorly used in others. The college should build on the good practice which exists, for example, in modern languages, history and religious education. In the theatre block there are useful displays of current photographs to help year 7 pupils. The artwork displayed is often of a high standard and would benefit from being framed to enhance its' value.

185 The college takes care to ensure the health and safety of students, but the dilapidated state of many of the buildings gives rise to a number of health and safety concerns. In the science accommodation, the external flammables store is accessible to vandalism, there are broken taps and corroded power points. The size of classes makes the science laboratories too small for practical work at Key Stages 3 and 4. In technology, the working space available is close to the minimum permissible limits. The paving slabs around the main site are uneven in many areas and the white delineation of steps is worn away.

186 The overall availability and condition of the accommodation has a generally negative impact on quality of learning and on the morale of staff and students. The college should undertake a comprehensive audit of the accommodation and formulate an action plan with the LEA, so that current deficiencies and future needs are identified for action.

### **Pupils' welfare and guidance**

187 The college places considerable emphasis on the care of students and the pastoral system operates effectively. Students' welfare and guidance are provided through a structure of vice principal pastoral, senior teacher pastoral, heads of year and their deputies and a head of sixth form. The roles and responsibilities of heads of year and form tutors are clear and well understood. Students are well known to the year staff and form tutors and receive appropriate individual support throughout their time in school. The majority of parents are pleased with the help and guidance provided by the college, and by its ready response to their requests.

188 Effective measures are in place to ensure the health and safety of students and departments such as science and technology pay particular attention to safe practice. However there are a number of health and safety concerns due to the poor state of repair of some of the buildings and facilities. There are regular health and safety checks and inspections and staff share responsibility for the prompt reporting of matters of concern.



189 The school has several trained first aiders and first aid boxes are available in key locations. A medical room is available. The college benefits from the services of a school nurse and a school counsellor, who also co-ordinates the personal, health and social education programme. Child protection procedures are in place and confidential information is handled with sensitivity. Firm and prompt action is taken against known cases of bullying.

190 Some form tutors make good use of registration periods to check homework diaries and give out notices but good practice is not uniform or consistent. Form tutors are responsible for teaching some of the PHSE programme. The college has a number of staff who are experienced in certain aspects of the PHSE programme and uses this expertise as effectively as possible. Some informal monitoring of the standard and effectiveness of the PHSE programme occurs. The year structure is strong and offers consistent support to staff and students.

191 The structure and content of the PHSE programme are clearly laid out. Topics covered are reasonably broad and give appropriate emphasis to health education, careers guidance and preparation for life beyond school. The use of outside speakers enhances the PHSE programme and this could be further extended. The college has an approved policy for both health and sex education.

192 The careers service has a regular contribution to guidance at the college, involving pupils from year 9 to year 13, and the college benefits from a careers office on the site. All students in year 10 have the opportunity of work experience and those in year 11 have an individual interview with the careers officer and a senior member of staff about the sixth form or college courses. The teacher in charge of careers and work experience has established a wide range of contacts with local industry and commerce, and works hard to ensure that all students have an appropriate and useful work experience placement. However the time available to fulfil the obligations of the post is insufficient to ensure effective future development. Information and guidance regarding higher education is available.

193 The college is well supported by its Education Welfare Officer, Youth Tutor and College Counsellor, all of whom give valuable support to students and who enrich the quality of personal care provided. The very good personal relationships which exist within the college create an environment in which students can be secure.

### **Links with parents, agencies and other institutions**

194 Parents are generally supportive of the college and feel welcome in it. Most parents are satisfied with the information they receive from the college and welcome recent initiatives to involve them more in decision making, for example, the consultation over the change in uniform. Parents consider that students are given a good standard of help and guidance, together with many and varied opportunities for personal development. The college has an active Parent Teacher Association which supports the college in a number of ways.

195 The college has a well established and effective induction process which is appreciated by parents. All students and their parents have the opportunity to visit the college and students have a preliminary morning before they join. Staff from the college visit the primary schools to meet pupils and discuss their progress. The college receives a range of useful information from primary schools. Curriculum links are well developed in some areas, for example in mathematics, English, geography, technology and physical education. Though not so well in others. Induction to the sixth form is also effectively managed.

196 The college has good working relationships with the educational psychology service, the careers service, the educational welfare officer, special needs support services, the school nurse and medical officer and other outside agencies.

197 Particularly strong links exist with the community through the college's work as a community college. This has grown steadily over recent years, and there are now some 2400 enrolments and a very wide programme for all ages and interests. The college youth tutor is closely involved with the Bideford Youth Forum, which has a thriving membership of groups with a combined membership of over 700. The community programme is ably led, and there are very good links with the college governors and senior management team. There is a new franchise agreement with Cornwall College, and much positive development for the benefit of college pupils and the local community. The college theatre, which doubles as the community cinema, has a positive effect in raising the profile and image of the college in the wider community.

198 All pupils have the opportunity for work experience and receive careers guidance. Through its GNVQ programme the college is developing stronger links with industry and commerce, but these are not yet well developed to support the curriculum in all areas. However, in geography, initiatives on Economic and Industrial Understanding through the Devon Education Business Partnership have resulted in the college receiving two awards from the Construction Industry Training Board and there is also strong involvement in the Geography Schools Industry Project with the resultant enrichment of the curriculum. The college benefits from some sponsorship and should work to extend this.

199 Charity fund raising is a feature of college life with a number of charities receiving support. In particular, there are strong links both with the local guide dog association and the talking newspaper. Students run a range of enterprises to support the integrated humanities course, and have the opportunity to participate in educational visits, including theatre trips, field trips and visits to art galleries. There are also opportunities for residential activities. Some sixth form students have the chance to undertake work experience in France and Germany.

200 Parents' support of sports activities and the school productions is strong and appreciated. The college is justly proud of its record in the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme and of the positive links this fosters.