

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **ST RICHARD'S CATHOLIC COLLEGE**

Bexhill-on-Sea

LEA area: East Sussex

Unique reference number: 114612

Principal : Mr A Campbell

Reporting inspector: Mrs G Kayembe  
2901

Dates of inspection: 17<sup>th</sup> - 20<sup>th</sup> September 2001

Inspection number: 190543

Short inspection carried out under Section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

© Crown copyright 2001

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that all extracts quoted are reproduced verbatim without adaptation and on condition that the source and date thereof are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the School Inspections Act 1996, the school must provide a copy of this report and/or its summary free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils:	11 – 16 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Ashdown Road Bexhill-on-Sea East Sussex
Postcode:	TN40 1SE
Telephone number:	01424 731070
Fax number:	01424 215623
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr P Champion
Date of previous inspection:	November 1996

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		
2901	Mrs G Kayembe	Registered inspector
8991	Ms P Goldsack	Lay inspector
19913	Mr R Garrett	Team inspector
18584	Dr M Davis	Team inspector

The inspection contractor was:

Bench Marque Limited  
National Westminster Bank Chambers  
Victoria Street  
Burnham-on-Sea  
Somerset  
TA8 1AN

Any concerns or complaints about the inspection or the report should be raised with the inspection contractor. Complaints that are not satisfactorily resolved by the contractor should be raised with OFSTED by writing to:

The Complaints Manager  
Inspection Quality Division  
The Office for Standards in Education  
Alexandra House  
33 Kingsway  
London WC2B 6SE

## **REPORT CONTENTS**

	Page
<b>PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT</b>	<b>6</b>
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
<b>PART B: COMMENTARY</b>	
<b>WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS</b>	<b>19</b>

## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

St. Richard's Catholic College is situated in the seaside town of Bexhill but draws the 826 boys and girls on roll from a wide area extending well beyond the town. The vast majority of pupils are Roman Catholics drawn from 11 parishes. Pupils come from a wide range of home backgrounds, and though the proportion taking free school meals is below average, some of the parishes served by the college are in areas which suffer from high levels of social and economic disadvantage. The overall socio-economic backgrounds of pupils broadly reflect national norms. The proportion of pupils on the special educational needs register is close to the national average though the proportion with statements is below. There has been an increase, from about 2 to 8.4 per cent, since the last inspection in the number of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds. About 2.5 per cent have English as an additional language, and is higher than found in most schools, but the college rarely has any who are beginners in English. Attainment on entry to the college is broadly average though there are relatively few pupils with very high or very low attainment. The college is a Beacon school working in partnership with other schools for mutual self-improvement.

### **HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS**

St. Richard's Catholic College is a very good school. It is very effective in helping pupils reach high standards of attainment. The very good quality of education provided ensures that pupils make very good progress and systematically build new knowledge and skills on what they already know, understand and can do. The quality of leadership and management is excellent because it is so clearly and single-mindedly focused on meeting pupils' individual needs and providing them with the best education possible. As a result, pupils thrive academically and socially. The outstanding leadership of the principal sets the tone for the college – high expectations combined with high quality pastoral care. Hence, pupils and staff want to be here and are inspired to give of their best. Overall, the college provides very good value for money.

#### **What the school does well**

- Excellent leadership and management throughout the college as a result of the outstanding leadership of the principal
- High standards of work and very good achievement in public examinations
- Very successful teaching in particular the challenge, pace and careful structure of the lessons
- Excellent provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils which enables them to become mature, caring and responsible youngsters
- Outstanding pastoral care based on mutual respect and high expectations of behaviour and achievement

#### **What could be improved**

- Developing further the use of different tasks for pupils of differing ability in the same class and the use of constructive comments in marking to help pupils improve their work
- Building on the very good progress made in information and communication technology (ICT) to ensure that more pupils develop higher level skills and make fuller use of computer programs

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

### **HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION**

The college has made very good improvement since the last inspection in 1996 and has done well to further improve the high standards seen at that time. The quality of teaching is now very good whereas it was previously reported as being 'generally good'. The key issues identified in the last inspection report have been tackled very effectively in the main and this has considerably enhanced the college's educational provision. The improvement in ICT has been very marked and the use of computers by most subject teachers is now good. The improvement to the curriculum has been good. Though there is still only one period a week for physical education in Years 10 to 11, this is supplemented by a wide variety of extra-curricular sporting activities and the introduction, since the previous inspection, of an optional GCSE in sports studies. The college is very well placed to continue to improve.

## STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved at the end of Year 11 based on average point scores in GCSE examinations.

Performance in:	compared with				Key
	all schools			similar schools*	
	1998	1999	2000	2000	
GCSE examinations	A	A	A	A	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E

\* similar schools are defined on the basis of the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals

The standards of work across the college are very good. National Curriculum test results for pupils aged 14 have been consistently well above national averages over the last four years. Mathematics and science results are particularly high and have tended to be well above the average of schools nationally over the last four years, 1997 to 2000. Results in these subjects also compare favourably with the results found in similar types of schools. English results have been above average for the last two years. The latest results of 2001 show further good improvement in all three subjects, particularly in mathematics and science.

Pupils' performance in GCSE examinations has been well above that of pupils nationally for the past four years, and was also well above the performance of pupils in similar types of schools in 2000. The 2001 results were a good improvement on the 2000 results. Results in all subjects were high in 2001, and particularly so in English, science, ICT, design and technology, French and sports studies. In these subjects there has been a consistent trend of very good achievement over the last few years. It is quite an achievement for the college that in the last two to three years, the performance of pupils in every subject has been at least in line with national averages and in the case of most it has been significantly above. No significant differences between the attainments of boys and girls emerge at either key stage. Pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds perform as well as their peers and achieve very well.

Standards of work seen during the inspection reflect the high standards reached in national tests and examinations. In English, pupils demonstrate very good competence in a wide variety of writing and in particular show a strong personal response to their reading. They are confident speakers and attentive listeners in English and in other subjects. Pupils' numeracy skills are good and most are adept at solving complex mathematical problems by the age of 16. In science, pupils demonstrate good knowledge and understanding of scientific facts and ideas and are skilled in experimental investigation work. Their overall ICT skills are good, although there is, at times, some variation between the standards of ICT work of different pupils in the same class.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Excellent. Pupils are very positive about college and enjoy being there. They are keen in lessons and want to do their best.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Excellent. Pupils are very sensible and mature. They behave in a responsible manner around the college. Behaviour in lessons is almost invariably flawless.
Personal development and relationships	Excellent. Pupils demonstrate great sensitivity and consideration of others. Relationships are excellent.
Attendance	Well above average. Pupils arrive punctually to lessons.

Pupils behave well because they understand the importance of good behaviour. The majority demonstrate remarkable restraint and self-discipline for their ages. The few pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties are making very good progress in modifying their behaviour. There are no permanent exclusions and the rate of fixed term exclusions is low. Overall, pupils are proud of their

college and proud to be part of the college community. They are keen to work hard and to make a valid and worthwhile contribution to college life.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Years 7 – 9	Years 10 – 11
Quality of teaching	Very good	Very good

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

Teaching is remarkably successful in helping pupils to achieve very well and to raise the standards of their work well beyond what might be reasonably expected given what they know, understand and can do when they begin at the college. Key strengths in teaching include: demanding work so that pupils are intellectually stretched, cracking pace so that optimal use is made of time and very well structured tasks so that pupils can grapple with new ideas, knowledge or skills effectively. Well thought out tasks motivate pupils and successfully engage their interest so that they work hard. Pupils are very good at getting on with their work by themselves with minimal help from the teacher, though they readily ask for it if they encounter any difficulties. Literacy and numeracy skills are well taught and this promotes pupils' learning in all subjects.

Whilst the teaching meets pupils' needs well, and teachers provide very good individual attention to pupils in lessons, opportunities for providing different tasks to those of differing ability in the same lesson are sometimes missed. There is scope for the college to develop its practice further with respect to this. Homework provided is of good quality and builds very effectively on the work done in class. Teachers mark books regularly, however, not all provide constructive comments to help pupils understand what they need to do to improve. The very good working relationships that teachers establish with pupils are helpful in creating a very effective work-centred atmosphere for learning. Pupils work hard, willingly giving their whole-hearted attention to their work in most lessons.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Very good overall. Very carefully structured programmes for teaching provide very good depth of coverage as well as breadth. Provision for extra curricular activities is very good.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. Pupils with special educational needs are very well supported and there are very suitable programmes of work to enable them to achieve as well as other pupils. Co-ordination and deployment of support staff are very good.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language (EAL)	The vast majority of pupils with EAL are fluent in English and require little additional help. These pupils achieve very well. On the rare occasions the college has pupils who are beginners in English, they are well provided for and make rapid progress in learning English.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Excellent provision for pupils' personal development. The opportunities for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are excellent. There has been considerable improvement since the last inspection in the opportunities pupils have for exploring the diversity of cultures represented in the college and in Britain today.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Excellent pastoral care including health and safety and child protection arrangements. Pupils are treated as individuals and are well known by staff. Each pupil is highly valued and regarded as precious for his or her own sake.

The college Chaplain makes an excellent contribution to pupils' personal development and their pastoral care.



## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The outstanding leadership provided by the principal is reflected within all the levels of management of the college. This is a community united by a clear and singular purpose: that of providing the best education for the pupils in its care.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors fulfil their responsibilities well. They are actively involved in the work of the college. Individual responsibilities are very effectively delegated within the governing body and managed by it. Governors keep a close eye on standards and have effective methods of monitoring the college's work. They have a good strategic overview of the future development of the college.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. The college monitors its work well and knows its strengths and weaknesses. Where monitoring points to a need for improvement the college readily takes the necessary action.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. Resources are very well used and deployed. The college is aware of and applies the principles of best value, effectively getting the most out of its resources, human, physical and financial.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The college's high expectations of pupils</li> <li>• The leadership and management of the college</li> <li>• The extent to which the college helps children to become mature and responsible</li> <li>• The approachability of the college</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some parents have concerns about the amount of homework provided</li> </ul>

The overall views of parents are very positive and they fully support the college. This is a result of the very good relationships and communication the college has established with parents. The inspection evidence whole-heartedly supports parents' positive views of the college. However, there is little evidence to support the concerns about homework that a minority of parents expressed. Overall, the homework provided is good and makes an effective contribution to pupils' learning.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

### **WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL**

#### **Excellent leadership and management throughout the college as a result of the outstanding leadership of the principal**

1. The principal is an outstanding leader who provides the college community with a very clear direction for educational development. A very high premium is placed on the needs of individual pupils, academic and personal, and the principal is very clear that the college is there to provide the best care and the best education for all pupils. His high visibility around the college contributes in part to the exceptional degree to which he is in tune with the needs of pupils and staff and they find him easily accessible and approachable. The very high expectations set by the principal are fully endorsed by the staff and this results in a strong staff who support one another and work remarkably well as a team. There is a very effective culture of self-evaluation and staff are constantly seeking ways to improve their practice, secure in the knowledge that they will receive every support from senior staff and that their ideas and initiatives are valued.
2. The delegation of duties is very well managed and senior staff are not only clear about their roles, but provide excellent leadership in their own right. Line management arrangements promote good practice and teamwork and encourage middle managers, such as heads of department and heads of year, to be reflective about the work that is done in their areas. Monitoring and evaluation of the work of the college are very well developed. There is rigorous examination of performance. It is clear that heads of department provide informed leadership and clear guidance to staff in their areas in order to help achieve the very good performance of pupils in national tests and examinations. They feel well supported by the senior management team in this.
3. Teamwork and involvement of whole staff in the development of the college is very successfully managed through teams which focus on specific areas of work, such as the curriculum or staff development. These are chaired by key staff appointed by the principal, but involve all teaching staff, who are asked to join at least one such group, as well as many support staff. This practice promotes very good staff development for younger members of staff, but even more importantly it encourages every member of staff to feel that they are stakeholders in the running of the college. It enables staff to develop a good understanding of the whole college issues and make valid contributions to whole college developments as well as to their own particular departments. In addition, governors are also invited to join one of the groups and this provides a very valuable opportunity for them to become closely involved in the college's work and to develop a strong working knowledge of the college's strengths and areas for development.
4. The college regularly provides governors with very useful data and information and this enables them to be very well-informed about the work of the college and to perform their roles very effectively. Particularly useful is the annual meeting with governors to go through the analysis of examination results every September. As a result governors have a very clear understanding of the relative performance of different areas and the knowledge and opportunity to ask probing questions about differences between departments.
5. Essentially what makes the leadership and management of the college excellent is the clarity of purpose of the college. The college is there for the benefit of pupils and no time is wasted on activities which at the end of the day are not going to be of

benefit to them. There is thus a strong, shared common purpose, promoted by the principal through his vision for the college and his high expectations of the quality of its work. The result is a very strong team which makes a tangible difference to the lives of pupils. The college turns out successful and confident youngsters because it is so well led and managed.

### **High standards of work and very good achievement in public examinations**

6. The standards of work across the college are very good. Pupils begin at the college with broadly average attainment, though there are relatively few pupils with very high or very low attainment. The overall National Curriculum test results for pupils aged 14 have been consistently well above national averages over the last four years. Mathematics and science results are particularly high and have tended to be well above the average of schools nationally over the last four years, 1997 to 2000. English results have been above average for the last two years. In 2000, the proportion of pupils gaining expected levels or higher was above average in English and mathematics and well above average in science. The proportion gaining the higher levels were above average in mathematics and well above average in science, though only in line with national averages in English. Overall, pupils achieved well in comparison to their prior attainment. Results in all three subjects compare favourably with the results found in similar types of schools based on the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals. The latest results of 2001 show further, good improvement in all three subjects, but particularly so in mathematics and science where the proportion of pupils gaining the expected level and the proportion of those gaining the higher levels showed good increases. The 2001 results in both mathematics and science were well above the average of schools nationally and well above the averages found in similar types of schools. In English, though the proportion of pupils gaining the expected level remained the same as in the previous year, the proportion gaining the higher levels showed a good increase, going up from about 28 per cent in 2000 to 41 per cent in 2001. The English results were above the national average. Overall, the college does very well to enable as many pupils as it does to gain the higher levels given that there are relatively few higher attainers to begin with. The overall trend in improvement of results in National Curriculum tests has been in line with the trend nationally over the last four years, between 1997 and 2000. The college has done well to maintain its high overall standards. The trend in mathematics and science has been better than the trend nationally and overall signals very good improvement.
7. Pupils' performance in GCSE examinations has been well above the performance of pupils nationally for the past four years, and their performance was also well above the performance of pupils in similar types of schools in 2000. The 2001 results were a good improvement on the 2000 results. The proportion of pupils who gain at least five GCSEs at grades A\*-C has been consistently high and well above the average of schools nationally. The proportion of pupils gaining five or more GCSEs at grades A\*-C in 2001 was even higher than in 2000, showing very good improvement overall between the time of the last inspection and this one. The proportion of pupils gaining at least five GCSEs at grades A\*-G is usually very high in comparison to schools nationally and similar types of schools. The college does very well with lower attainers and every pupil gains at least one GCSE grade A\*-G. Given the overall average attainment on entry to the college, GCSE results indicate that the college promotes very good achievement and that pupils make remarkable progress.
8. Another remarkable achievement for the college is that the GCSE results in all subjects reach at least national averages, and in most subjects the results are significantly higher than the results in schools nationally. Where results tend sometimes to be in line with national averages rather than higher, it is usually

subjects with small groups of pupils taking the course and results reflect the wide variations in the prior attainment of pupils taking these courses. Closer examination of the results reveals that even where the difference between national results and the college's results is not marked, the progress made by pupils in achieving the results they have attained is very good. Results in all subjects were high in 2001, but particularly so in English, science, ICT, design and technology, French and sports studies. In these subjects there has been a consistent trend of very good achievement over the last few years. Mathematics results in 2001 were much better than in the previous year when they caused the college some concern. Improved results here are indicative of the action taken to ensure that standards were not allowed to drop.

9. Standards of work seen during the inspection reflect the high standards reached in national tests and examinations. In English, pupils demonstrate very good competence in a wide variety of writing. They write with increasing fluency as they move through the college and develop a very good range of vocabulary by the end of Year 11. Pupils' punctuation, grammar and spelling is accurate, especially by the time they get to the end of Year 11. Pupils enjoy reading and in particular show a strong personal response to their reading. Year 11 pupils demonstrated very good levels of attainment in an English lesson on Macbeth when they were involved in a 'hot-seating' activity which forced them to explain the motivation of the character using the information from the original text. Pupils effectively tackle difficult poetry where initially the meaning seems to be rather obscure, but through persistence and through diligent unpicking of the imagery they are able to establish key ideas the poet is trying to communicate. Their ability to extract information from fiction and non-fiction is very good and enable pupils to make effective use of a variety of information sources when working in other areas of the curriculum. Pupils develop very good levels of confidence as speakers and are attentive listeners in English and in other subjects.
10. In mathematics, pupils make very good progress as they move through the college in developing their numeracy skills. Mental arithmetic skills are very secure so that most pupils are adept at solving mathematical problems. One of the key features of the progress that pupils make is their capacity to approach and solve problems so that they are not merely repeating a method or process they have been shown but are able to manipulate numbers and equations and to make decisions on how best to approach a problem and solve it. This skill is developed very well as pupils move through the college. As a result, many pupils produce mathematical investigational work of high quality. Able pupils are stretched very well in mathematics. For example, a high attaining set in Year 11 coped very well with some very difficult algebra problems. Pupils make good use of their numeracy skills in other subjects, for example in science and geography, pupils apply well their skills in producing graphs and charts to help them analyse data.
11. In science, pupils demonstrate good knowledge and understanding of scientific facts and ideas. By the time they are in Year 11, able pupils have a very good understanding of the structure and functions of the lungs, for example, and lower attainers have a good grasp, for their ability level, of the structure of a cell and function of the cell membrane. Very good opportunities for experimental work help pupils to develop their knowledge and understanding of science. In addition, pupils also develop well their skills in experimental investigation work. By the end of Year 9, pupils have good skills in measurement and recording of results. They draw relevant conclusions from experiments which help them to further their understanding of important scientific ideas.
12. In other subjects, pupils also demonstrate high attainment and very good progress. In history and geography, pupils develop at a very good rate their skills in drawing out

further information from a variety of sources of evidence. This enables them to pose useful hypotheses based on their evaluation of the evidence and to draw pertinent conclusions which help them to understand historical or geographical concepts. In effect they are developing good enquiry skills. In modern foreign languages, pupils are developing good levels of confidence in speaking in German or French and are able to hold good quality conversations by the time they are in Year 11. Artwork is lively and vibrant. Some of the GCSE work on display has been researched in detail and very in-depth analysis carried out by pupils. The ideas and their development in the best GCSE work show considerable maturity, creativity and coherence. Very good progress was seen in physical education lessons where pupils were enabled to develop new skills at a rapid pace and to refine existing skills to help them participate more effectively when playing games such as hockey and football. Pupils' ICT skills are good, although there is at times some variation between the standards at which different pupils in the same class are working. In design and technology, the quality of pupils' design work is very high. They carry out detailed research and produce creative and interesting ideas to take forward for development. For example, in a Year 9 project on hats, where pupils were designing a hat for an occasion, the range of ideas was very wide. Pupils' graphic skills are also very good.

13. Pupils with special educational needs, including those with statements, make very good progress and this is evident in the fact that the college has very few pupils who attain low grades at GCSE and none who do not obtain any GCSE passes. It is clear from the college's thorough monitoring of individual pupils, and from inspection observations, that pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds are doing very well in relation to their prior attainment. Progress against the challenging targets that all pupils are set is rigorously monitored and shows that those from a wide range of other ethnic backgrounds are achieving as well as those of white UK heritage

### **Very successful teaching in particular the challenge, pace and careful structure of the lessons**

14. The very good quality of teaching makes a significant contribution to the very good achievement of pupils. It is very successful in raising the standards of their work well beyond what might be reasonably expected given what they know, understand and can do when they begin at the college. High expectations of pupils are a key characteristic of the overall very good teaching at the college. Teachers make unstinting demands on pupils' intellectual abilities so that they are stretched, whatever their capability, and made to think for themselves. Very good questioning is a common feature of many lessons and the probing nature of the questioning is but one illustration of how teachers push pupils to the limits of their understanding. As a result, pupils are made to think hard and to work out their own solutions to problems. For example, in a mathematics lesson in Year 7, pupils were presented with a difficult problem based on finding a common pattern in a series of rectangular borders made up of small squares. They were given the opportunity to think about it on their own before help was provided. The teacher gradually gave them clues and hints to help them towards a solution, and eventually most pupils understood how to find the answer. However, even more importantly, they learned to think more creatively about problem solving and acquired some insights into how to tackle a new kind of problem. The high expectations of teachers also mean that they encourage pupils not to be afraid to have a go. In an art lesson for Year 7 pupils, very good progress was made in learning to draw a face through skilled teaching and modelling of the way in which tools could be used to obtain an effective portrait. The high level of challenge in the work pupils are given is very evident in the written work of pupils which shows that teachers do not set work that is too easy for pupils and that the expectations in the

work are high when compared with the expectations nationally for pupils of a similar age.

15. The skill with which tasks are structured so as to maximise the learning that pupils can gain from them is another strong feature of the teaching. It is clear that teachers know their pupils well and know how to help them learn at a good pace. Teachers use this knowledge along with their own very good subject knowledge to provide relevant tasks that enable pupils to grapple with new ideas, knowledge or skills effectively through them. The level and quality of support given to individual pupils during lessons, especially whilst they are engaged in completing the tasks set, are very good. As a result, even when different tasks are not provided for pupils of differing ability, they are usually able to make very good gains in learning through the individual support they receive.
16. Tasks are interesting and, in the best lessons, very imaginative. For example, using the idea of 'hot seating' in English where pupils role play a character from a book or play and answer questions put to them by others in the class. This enables pupils both to empathise with the character and to analyse his or her motivations, views or feelings. Tasks are very well constructed to promote pupils' learning. In science for example, there is a very good balance of experimental work interspersed with whole class teaching and questioning to enable pupils to understand theoretical science through practical and concrete examples. The use of a variety of sources of information in history and geography help pupils to develop very good skills of enquiry. Well thought out tasks result in pupils' interest being effectively engaged and in motivating them to work hard. Well-structured tasks also help pupils to be able to learn to work by themselves and to become independent learners. In physical education the use of a series of carefully staged tasks enable pupils to develop a new skill, practise it and then apply it in the context of a game. This approach was seen being very effectively used with Year 7 girls learning how to play hockey, many for the first time, as well as with older pupils in a football lesson.
17. Teaching on the whole makes little concession to time. Lessons begin promptly and pupils are usually very quickly engaged and involved in the work set for them. The 50 minute periods also help to keep the pace moving as teachers are very aware that a few minutes lost from a 50 minute period can be quite costly in terms of reducing the overall time for work. However, the very good use made of time is also due to the positive attitudes amongst teachers and pupils. These result in the creation of a very good work-centred atmosphere in classrooms. Examination of pupils' work shows that teachers move fairly quickly through teaching programmes and the set work programme is covered at a good rate.
18. Whilst the teaching meets pupils' needs well, usually through very good individual support from class teachers, opportunities for providing different tasks to pupils of differing ability in the same class are sometimes missed. There is scope for the college to develop its practice further with respect to this. Homework provided is of good quality and builds very effectively on the work done in class. Books are regularly marked in most cases. However, though teachers provide much verbal feedback to pupils, not all provide written comments to help pupils understand what they need to do to improve their work.

**Excellent provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils which enables them to become mature, caring and responsible youngsters**

19. There is excellent provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The college places a high value on the personal development of pupils and the college's aims and mission statement make these expectations clear. The

Catholic nature of the college does much to promote spirituality amongst pupils and there are a wide variety of opportunities for reflection and consideration of the non-material dimension to life. Pupils participate in these opportunities with enthusiasm and joy. They easily express their awe or wonderment at the unexpected, for example in a mathematics lesson when one pupil successfully worked out a problem that had been baffling others, the class appreciated his efforts. Assemblies provide excellent opportunities for pupils to appreciate moral and spiritual values. Their very good participation in assemblies makes these occasions even more poignant. Pupils appreciate the purpose of assemblies and value the time they spend together reflecting on important issues arising out of everyday life. Teachers make very good use of form periods to promote spiritual, moral, social and cultural values. A form assembly based on the tragedy in New York elicited very good response from pupils. Staff are very conscious of the need to make the most of opportunities in lessons to enable pupils to appreciate and value non-tangible things around them. They provide opportunities for pupils to reflect on issues and to express their views and their feelings.

20. There are many opportunities for pupils to discuss moral issues and develop their understanding of how to arrive at sensible decisions about their lives. Personal and social education lessons are highly valued by pupils and they agree that the discussion they have about issues such as racism, about sex and drugs awareness help them to understand how important it is to make the right decisions. They also feel that they learn how they might go about weighing up the advantages and disadvantages in the decisions they might make. Overall, the programme for personal and social education makes an excellent contribution to pupils' social and moral development. There are many opportunities within the curriculum for pupils to examine moral questions and to be guided into thinking about and developing their understanding of right and wrong. Though there is a strong sense of discipline within the college and a very clear moral code, the college is outstanding in the way in which it promotes pupils' own sense of self-discipline. Ultimately, pupils behave well because they feel it is the right thing to do not because they fear any sanction.
21. Social development is excellently promoted through the community life of the college. Pupils are made to feel they are part of a family. There are many opportunities in lessons for pupils to work together. Harmonious relationships are very effectively promoted and maintained by the college. Through college councils and a system of prefects, pupils learn to take on responsibility and this helps them to become mature and responsible citizens. The leadership course for prefects is a very effective way of promoting pupils' personal development. A wide range of extra-curricular activities, including trips and visits as well as visitors to the college make a considerable contribution to pupils' social and cultural development. Social responsibility is also very effectively promoted through the fund-raising work done by pupils. In addition, pupils regularly visit, and invite to the college, pupils from a local special needs school.
22. The college has improved considerably the opportunities available for examining the diversity of cultures represented in Britain today and within the college. There is an annual themed day, which is based on a different country each year, for example. In religious education, pupils explore religions and beliefs other than Christianity. There are staff links with a school in Botswana for which the college raises money as well. Cultural development is enhanced by regular drama performances and music concerts.
23. The college Chaplain makes an excellent contribution to the pupils' personal development. He is very much a part of the college and is there as a guide for staff, parents and pupils. Pupils feel they can come to him for advice and support and he

makes himself accessible to all. He is a very highly valued member of the college staff.

### **Outstanding pastoral care based on mutual respect and high expectations of behaviour and achievement**

24. The college promotes a high level of personal care for pupils. This extends to the care for their academic development as well as their personal development. The happiness and well being of every pupil is of paramount importance. The principal plays a leading role in promoting the high expectations of behaviour and achievement and in establishing a basis for mutual trust and respect.
25. Heads of year are very well organised and maintain a very good focus on the personal and academic development of individual pupils. There is very good monitoring and tracking of individual pupils and very quick response where pupils are not making expected progress or are encountering difficulties in settling in or behaving well. The contact and communication maintained with parents is excellent so that they are placed in a very good position to support their children in such situations.
26. The special needs department provides excellent care for the needs of pupils on the special educational needs register. They are all well known by the department and are very well supported both academically and pastorally.
27. Arrangements for child protection and for health and safety are excellent. A number of issues were identified in the last inspection report on child protection and these have been very effectively addressed. Arrangements are now very comprehensive and all staff are aware of the college's procedures. Children who are in Public Care are very well looked after by the college. The governors' building and safety committee ensure proper health and safety arrangements are appropriately in place. These arrangements extend beyond the legal requirements. Risk assessments are carried out thoroughly and very regularly. Buildings and grounds are continually monitored and reported on at each governing body meeting.
28. Arrangements for pupils' safety extend to transport to and from home. Older pupils on trains and buses are expected to keep an eye on younger ones and are effectively 'prefects' on public transport. Arrangements for anti-bullying are also excellent and the college deals very swiftly with any issues of bullying that arise. Parents were very happy with the college's approach to issues of behaviour and of bullying in particular.

### **WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED**

#### **Developing the use of different tasks for pupils of differing ability in the same class and the use of constructive comments in marking to help pupils improve their work**

29. Whilst the teaching meets the needs of pupils well, there are missed opportunities for more finely tuning work or tasks to the individual needs of pupils in some lessons. In many lessons, teachers have available extension tasks for pupils who complete work quickly and who are capable of completing harder work. This is often the case in mathematics, for example. In a German lesson for Year 9 pupils where the focus was on developing use of language for holiday purposes, extension materials were available for more able pupils. This gave them more challenging vocabulary and sentence construction activities. Occasionally, teachers provide different work for pupils of differing ability within the same class i.e. differentiated work. There are occasions when such practice could promote better the progress of certain groups



within the class. This is especially the case given that the college makes fairly limited use of setting, i.e. organising pupils in groups according to prior attainment.

30. In some lessons, pupils' progress, though at least satisfactory, was limited by the lack of availability of work planned to meet the individual learning needs. In a geography lesson about coastline erosion, whilst most pupils made very good progress, some lower attaining pupils did not make quite such good progress as the work was not differentiated to meet their needs more effectively. They received good support from the teacher which enabled them to complete the activity to a reasonably good standard, but there was no different written activity which might have better suited their level of knowledge and understanding. In another lesson, an ICT lesson on the Internet, a number of pupils were already familiar with the use of the Internet and the activities provided did not take sufficient account of their prior attainment. Lack of the availability of a different task which took account of these pupils' knowledge of the Internet meant they were not extending their knowledge and skills as much as they might have, though they did push themselves to explore the Internet and try to find out more about it without being prompted to do so through a specific task or exercise. On the whole, the college makes up for lack of differentiation through the support provided to pupils. In addition, pupils' own attitudes and high level of motivation mean that they are ready to tackle difficult tasks or to go beyond the task if it is too easy to set themselves their own challenges, as in the ICT example above. However, developing the use of differentiated tasks provides the college with a useful way of refining its teaching further and extending the variety and range of teaching methods to meet the needs of all pupils.
31. Books are regularly marked and marking of books is regularly checked by the head of department and senior staff. Whilst some teachers write useful constructive comments telling pupils how they might improve their work, others miss opportunities to do this. Hence pupils do not always get useful information on what they need to improve their work or have simple targets that they can work towards. Whilst there is good verbal feedback to pupils, the lack of written feedback and targets for improvement means they may not always focus precisely enough on the area for improvement. It also means that parents are deprived of the opportunity to help and support their children. The senior staff are aware of this and are keen to develop the marking of books further in order to incorporate constructive and informative comments for pupils.

**Building on the very good progress made in information and communication technology (ICT) to ensure that more pupils develop higher level skills and make fuller use of computer programs**

32. The college has made remarkably good progress in the development of the use of ICT since the last inspection. There are regular ICT lessons for pupils in Years 7 to 9 where they learn key skills in using a variety of programs. There is a very successful GCSE ICT course for pupils in Years 10 to 11. In addition to this, pupils throughout the college make regular, and increasing, use of computers in all other subjects. However, the level of skill used in cross-curricular use of computers is not always as high as in the ICT lessons. In addition, there is some variation in the skill levels of pupils in the same class and their depth of knowledge about the facilities offered by standard programs such as word processors. For example, in a Year 9 lesson, some pupils could easily format text in a word processors, including using bullet points, whilst others were struggling to work out how to centre a heading or indent a paragraph.
33. Teachers at the college have all undertaken nationally funded training for ICT and so their skills are at least sound and in many cases good. The college is well off for

equipment and all teachers have a laptop. These factors have been key to the promotion of the use of computers in the subjects of the curriculum. Whilst on the departmental development plan, the college does not yet have a scheme of work for the cross-curricular use of ICT and hence there is not yet a structured programme of progression of pupils' skills in ICT which could guide teachers on what to expect pupils to be able to do and therefore the help they need to provide to pupils.

#### **WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?**

34. In order to build on its remarkable success, the college should:

- (1) Improve differentiation and marking by:
  - providing pupils of differing abilities in the same class with different tasks or tasks graded at two or three different levels of difficulty;
  - ensuring that all marking provides pupils with written comments that help them to understand what they need to do to improve their work further.
  
- (2) Enable pupils to make use of programs at a higher level and narrow the gap between what the most competent pupils can do and those who are still using programs at a very basic level by:
  - putting in place as planned the scheme of work for cross-curricular use of ICT;
  - developing staff awareness of the depth of use they can make in their subjects of different programs;
  - assessing pupils' progress in curricular use of ICT more rigorously.

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

### Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	39
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	22

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	1	15	20	3	0	0	0
Percentage	3	38	51	8	0	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting these percentages as each lesson represents more than two percentage points.

### Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils on the school's roll	826
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	65

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	10
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	135

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	21

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	14
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	5

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.3
National comparative data	7.7

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.2
National comparative data	1.1

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

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 (Year 9)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	85	80	165

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	53	67	72
	Girls	71	70	72
	Total	124	137	144
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	75 (75)	83 (77)	87 (78)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	41 (28)	61 (50)	50 (41)
	National	32 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	68	62	70
	Girls	72	72	68
	Total	140	138	138
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	85 (82)	84 (84)	84 (73)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	48 (37)	50 (51)	48 (46)
	National	31 (31)	42 (39)	33 (29)

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	77	74	151

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	53	76	77
	Girls	56	74	74
	Total	109	150	151
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	72.2 (63)	99 (99)	100 (99)*
	National	47.2 (47.4)	88.9 (90.6)	94.6 (95.6)

\*This figure is not a 100% as in some years there are one or more pupils who take GCSE examinations a year early or a year late, but they are still included in the figures for the year in which they reached the age of 16.

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	50.8 (47)
	National	38.1 (38.4)

### **Ethnic background of pupils**

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	4
Black – African heritage	1
Black – other	0
Indian	4
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	757
Any other minority ethnic group	60

### **Exclusions in the last school year**

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	7	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

### **Teachers and classes**

#### **Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y11**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	44.8
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	18.4

#### **Education support staff: Y7 – Y11**

Total number of education support staff	14
Total aggregate hours worked per week	421

#### **Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11**

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	70%
---	-----

#### **Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11**

Key Stage 3	25.1
Key Stage 4	23.7

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### **Financial information**

Financial year	2000/2001
----------------	-----------

	£
Total income	1,995,067
Total expenditure	1,977,460
Expenditure per pupil	2,402
Balance brought forward from previous year	60,241
Balance carried forward to next year	77,848

### **Recruitment of teachers**

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years (FTE)	8.6
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years (FTE)	10.6

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	675
Number of questionnaires returned	198

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	54	41	4	1	1
My child is making good progress in school.	60	37	2	1	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	63	34	1	0	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	37	46	14	1	2
The teaching is good.	64	35	0	1	1
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	57	38	5	1	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	72	23	3	2	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	83	16	0	1	0
The school works closely with parents.	53	36	7	3	3
The school is well led and managed.	76	21	2	1	1
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	68	30	2	0	1
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	51	36	6	3	4