

INSPECTION REPORT

SALVATORIAN COLLEGE

Harrow Weald, Middlesex

LEA area: Harrow

Unique reference number: 102244

Headteacher: Andrew Graham

Reporting inspector: Clare Gillies
20597

Dates of inspection: 9 - 13 December 2002

Inspection number: 252464

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE COLLEGE

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Voluntary aided

Age range of pupils: 11 to 16 years

Gender of pupils: Male

School address: High Road
Harrow Weald
Middlesex

Postcode: HA3 5DY

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Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Patrick O'Connell

Date of previous inspection: 8 September 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
20597	Clare Gillies	Registered inspector	Citizenship Educational inclusion	What sort of college is it? How high are standards? a) The college's results and pupils' achievements How well are pupils taught? How well is the college led and managed? What should the college do to improve further?
9334	Jenny Mynett	Lay inspector		How high are standards? b) Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the college care for its pupils? How well does the college work in partnership with parents?
23413	Robert Allen	Team inspector	English	
30553	Richard Fuller	Team inspector	Mathematics	
5241	Cyndi Millband	Team inspector	Science	
30281	Dorcas O'Dell	Team inspector	English as an additional language Special educational needs Art	
1990	Graham Preston	Team inspector	Business (GCSE) Design and technology	
4677	Valerie Banks	Team inspector	Geography	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
20877	David Pink	Team inspector	History	
32211	Brendan Geoghegan	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	

4829	Ian Waters	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE COLLEGE

Salvatorian College is a voluntary-aided, smaller than average, 11-16, boys' comprehensive school in the Trusteeship of the Society of the Divine Saviour. The aims, ideals and support of the Salvatorian Fathers continue to inspire and permeate the life of the college and its community. The college operates in partnership with the Archdiocese of Westminster and Harrow Local Education Authority (LEA). Having increased in size since the last inspection, it now has over 650 pupils and is oversubscribed for September 2003. Pupils come from about 40, mainly Catholic, primary schools in Harrow and other LEAs. Almost 75 per cent of pupils are white, with seven per cent Black Caribbean, seven per cent Black African and small percentages from other ethnic minority groups. Over 50 pupils speak English as an additional language, of whom only one does not speak English fluently. The main home languages are Tamil, Spanish, Italian, French and Arabic. The percentage of pupils who take free schools meals, 11 per cent, is below average. Just over five per cent of pupils, well below average, are on the register of special educational needs and the small number of pupils with statements is below average. Standards on entry are above average overall.

HOW GOOD THE COLLEGE IS

Salvatorian College is a successful school where boys mature into confident young citizens. Standards are consistently above average. Teaching is at least good in the majority of lessons and in some subjects it has excellent features. The headteacher generates respect from all members of the college community. He is most ably supported by the senior management team. Leadership and management are good and many departments are well organised. The college's income is average and it gives good value for money.

What the college does well

- Consistently above average standards in English, mathematics and science at the end of Year 9. Well above average English GCSE results.
- Teaching was at least good in the majority of lessons observed during the inspection including some which was very good or excellent.
- Pupils have very good attitudes to college life and behave well both in lessons and around the college.
- Relationships, between pupils and between teachers and pupils are very good, with mutual respect and tolerance very evident.
- Care for pupils is of a high standard. Pupils feel secure and form tutors know them well. The school council gives them a voice in college affairs. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good.
- Pupils' spiritual development. The Catholic ethos permeates the daily life of all members of the community. Pupils are fully aware of the high moral and social standards expected.
- Extra-curricular activities, especially in physical education, are very good.

What could be improved

- Music lacks status and often the music room cannot be used for lessons, which then take place in the dining room. The department has too few instruments and poor ICT equipment. All these factors have a negative effect on standards and pupils' enthusiasm for the subject.
- Improvements in ICT have taken place, but from such a low base that standards are still below average in all years. Information and communication technology (ICT) is not taught in Years 10 and 11 and other subjects use it too little to cover the statutory requirements of the National Curriculum.
- Standards are too low in history because the department has not taught the full National Curriculum, assessment is not effective and leadership and management are unsatisfactory.
- The accommodation and resources overall are unsatisfactory.

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

HOW THE COLLEGE HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION (September 1997)

Progress in the years following the last inspection was slow, but it speeded up in 2000 when the present headteacher arrived. Most departments now analyse data about standards and use this information to set targets, identify underachievement and analyse results, for example by ethnicity. Progress has been made in ICT, with better schemes of work, assessment in Years 7 to 9, more computers and the opening of the learning resource centre but there is still a long way to go. Personal and social education has weekly lessons and the content of these is carefully planned. The numerous minor areas for improvement have mainly been dealt with. Parents feel that the college has improved recently and overall progress since the last inspection has been satisfactory.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 16-year-olds based on average capped point scores in GCSE. The capped points score measures the top eight GCSE grades each pupil attained.

Performance in:	compared with				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	2000	2001	2002	2002	
GCSE examinations	C	C	B	A	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E

Years 7 to 9: the percentage of pupils reaching level 5 in the Year 9 national tests in 2002 was well above average in English, mathematics and science. At level 6 it was above average in English and mathematics and well above average in science. The overall points scores was above average compared to national figures and those for schools with a similar uptake of free school meals. The upward trend over the last five years has been above that seen nationally. Standards seen during the inspection were well above average in English, above average in mathematics, science, art, geography and physical education, below average in history and ICT and average in other subjects. Pupils' achievement is very good in English, good in mathematics, science, art, citizenship, geography and physical education, unsatisfactory in ICT, history and music and satisfactory in other subjects. Progress is satisfactory in music and most ICT lessons, but, for accommodation and resources reasons, achievement over time is not.

Years 10 and 11: the percentage of pupils attaining five GCSE grades A*-C, 53 per cent, was not as high in 2002 as it had been two years earlier. However, the average points score went up to its best ever, and above average for the first time. The capped points score was also above average in 2002 and well above average compared to similar schools. GCSE results compared to boys' nationally have been above average since 1997. In 2002, 97 per cent of pupils attained five GCSE grades A*-G. In 2002 the best results were in English, art, French, geography, music and physical education. History results were the lowest. Some of the best GCSE grades are attained by pupils from minority ethnic groups. Standards seen during the inspection were well above average in English, above average in mathematics, art, business studies, geography, music and physical education, below average in history and ICT and average in other subjects. Pupils' achievement is very good in English, good in mathematics, art, business studies, citizenship, geography, music, modern foreign languages and physical education, unsatisfactory in ICT and history and satisfactory in other subjects.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the college	Pupils are enthusiastic about attending the college and proud to be members of the community. They speak with pride about the college

	council and appreciate the good quality of teaching and the extra-curricular sporting activities. Large numbers participate in these activities.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Pupils behave well both in lessons and around the college. They are generally considerate and bullying is rare. Fixed period exclusions are applied because the college rigorously enforces high expectations of behaviour. Permanent exclusions are automatic for any incidents involving drugs.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships between pupils, and between teachers and pupils, are very good, with mutual respect and tolerance very evident. Pupils of different faiths and ethnic backgrounds all get on very well together. Boys are well prepared for their future lives and for living in a multi-racial society.
Attendance	Above average. Pupils are generally punctual and attend regularly.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Years 7 - 9	Years 10 - 11
Lessons seen overall	Good	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 was at least good in the majority of lessons observed during the inspection including some which was very good or excellent. Most of the few unsatisfactory lessons were taught by non-specialists or teachers who lacked experience or understanding of the National Curriculum. Teaching was most effective in Year 10 and in English, mathematics, business studies and music. It was good or better in the majority of lessons in English, mathematics, science, art, business studies, citizenship, geography, ICT, music, physical education and science. Very good plans for literacy and good plans for numeracy are in place and these basic skills are taught well. Teachers mainly organise work well for pupils of different abilities, including those with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language. However, a few subjects do not prepare different work enough. The college does not do as much as it could to give gifted pupils work matched to their abilities.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE COLLEGE

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good overall with very good extra-curricular activities, particularly in physical education. Careers education and the personal, social and health education programme, which includes elements of citizenship, are good. Statutory requirements for ICT in Years 10 and 11 are not met as it is not taught as a separate subject and is not used enough in other subjects. Wider Horizons Week is a valuable experience for pupils.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	This is very good as the college makes a determined and successful effort to provide practical and emotional support for all these pupils. Their academic and personal needs are considered thoughtfully and procedures put in place to help them to cope with college life.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Very few pupils do not speak English fluently but the college keeps a careful eye on their development and makes sure that they make as much progress as other pupils.

Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Overall this is very good. The Catholic ethos permeates the daily life of all members of the community. Pupils are fully aware of the high moral and social standards expected and they receive firm and consistent guidance from their tutors, and through the personal and social education programme. They are encouraged to think of those less fortunate than themselves.
How well the college cares for its pupils	Very well. Pupils feel secure and form tutors know them well. Pupils are welcomed into Year 7 (and Year 8 for the last time this year) and find the buddy and peer mentor system very supportive. The college council gives them a voice in college life. Teachers work hard to successfully maintain a harmonious atmosphere where pupils from all ethnic groups and those with special educational needs feel respected and valued.

Parents support the college enthusiastically. They donate, and raise considerable funds towards its development. They use the link book diaries to communicate with teachers most effectively and encourage their sons to complete homework and make the most of college life.

HOW WELL THE COLLEGE IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher has a calm, thoughtful style of leadership, which generates respect from all members of the college community. He is quite clear how he wants the college to improve, combining its Catholic heritage with development. He is most ably supported by the senior management team. Leadership and management are good and many departments, including special educational needs, are well organised. The technicians, catering and administrative staff contribute much to the smooth running of the college.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governors are astute about most of the college's strengths and areas of improvement. They are all extremely supportive of the headteacher and senior managers. They bring a good range of experience to their deliberations and question the headteacher confidently. Overall, they fulfil their responsibilities well. The governing body is not involved enough with the Key Stage 3 strategy, neither has it done enough to resolve the ICT and music issues.
The college's evaluation of its performance	Departments evaluate how they have performed and blend their comments into their future plans, which feed into the college development plan. The leadership team is fully aware of the areas needing improvement but progress is slow in some areas, for example in encouraging departments to use ICT or dealing with the considerable practical problems in music.
The strategic use of resources	Income beyond the basic budget is managed effectively, for example to support the special educational needs' department. The governors and senior management team apply the principles of best value well. After major planned expenditure on the building and computers in recent years, the college's income is tight this year, partly because the number of pupils has gone up and funding has yet to follow.

The accommodation and resources overall are unsatisfactory. The college's budget for departments' basic needs, such as textbooks and equipment, is particularly low this year and in some subjects this lowers standards.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE COLLEGE

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<p>Practically every question in the pre-inspection questionnaire received a very positive response, with at least nine out of ten parents strongly agreeing that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • their sons like college and are making good progress; • teaching is good and their sons are expected to work hard; • the college is well led and managed. They are happy to approach the college with problems or questions; • behaviour is good. 	<p>About one in ten parents who responded to the questionnaire:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • does not feel well informed about their son's progress; • feels the amount of homework is too much or too little; • is not convinced the college provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.

Over 300 parents returned the pre-inspection questionnaire and 23 attended the parents' meeting. At this meeting many positive views were stated. The only significant criticism, also written on the questionnaires by several parents, was the lack of lockers, and concerns that boys have to carry heavy bags around all day. This was also raised at the recent Annual General Meeting and governors have instigated research into the problem. Parents discussed homework, with conflicting opinions, depending on which year their son was in. A few felt that it was too easy for higher attainers and inspection evidence confirms that occasionally this is the case.

PART B: COMMENTARY

Year 11 pupils were taking their mock GCSE examinations during the inspection, so none of their lessons could be observed. Inspectors examined their coursework and notebooks and spoke to them on several occasions. Year 11 prefects came into school to do their regular duties and discussion were also held with them.

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The college's results and achievements

- Standards of work seen overall were above average.
 - Pupils achieve well and make good progress.
1. **Year 9 national tests:** the percentage of pupils reaching level 5, the expected level, in 2002 was well above average in English, mathematics and science. At level 6 it was above average in English and mathematics and well above average in science. Teacher assessments of levels in information and communication technology (ICT), included for the first time in 2002, reduced the overall points scores to above average compared to national figures and those for schools with a similar uptake of free school meals. The upward trend over the last five years has been above that seen nationally, both mathematics and science results were the best ever in 2002, and English was close to its previous best, attained in 1998.
 2. In 2002, 13 out of 14 pupils with special educational needs achieved better test results than had been predicted. In Years 7 to 9 these pupils' achievement over time is analysed carefully. For example, one pupil made very good progress in spelling and reading after only six sessions of focused work. Year 9 mathematics booster classes raised the percentage of pupils attaining level 5 and very effective literacy support was provided in the catch-up programme run by the head of English. Gifted mathematicians were given effective extra support before the 2002 national tests. The very few pupils who are at an early stage of learning English make as good progress as others as they are well supported.
 3. Standards in Years 7 to 9 are:
 - well above average in English;
 - above average in mathematics, science, art, geography and physical education;
 - average in citizenship, design and technology, modern foreign languages and music;
 - below average in history and ICT.
 4. Progress and achievement in Years 7 to 9 are:
 - very good in English;
 - good in mathematics, science, art, citizenship, geography and physical education;
 - satisfactory in design and technology, mathematics, modern foreign languages;
 - unsatisfactory in ICT, history and music. Progress is satisfactory in music and most ICT lessons, but achievement over time is not.
 5. **GCSEs:** the percentage of pupils attaining five GCSE grades A*-C, 53 per cent, was not as high in 2002 as it had been two years earlier. However, the average points score went up to its best ever, and above average for the first time. The college believes that this was because higher and lower attainers performed very well, those of middle attainment did not do quite so well. The capped points score (measuring the top eight GCSE grades each pupil attained) was also above average in 2002 and well above average compared to similar schools. GCSE results compared to boys' nationally have been above average since 1997. In 2002, 97 per cent of pupils attained five GCSE grades A*-G, the best result for three years. In 2002 the best results were in English, art, French, geography, music and physical education. History results were the lowest.
 6. All pupils who have special educational needs gained at least seven GCSE grades A*-G in 2002 and one pupil gained ten. All make good progress and some make exceptional progress. A pupil

with a statement for dyslexia attained eight GCSE grades A*-G, including grade D in English. Pupils with special educational needs succeed best in art and physical education and the majority makes very good progress in English. They make the least progress in GCSE history.

7. Pupils with English as an additional language attain some of the best results at GCSE. One pupil who has been in the school since Year 7 has made very good progress and is likely to gain ten A*-C GCSE grades, including a predicted B grade in English. Progress is rapid and pupils are encouraged to put in additional time to improve their learning. Very successful booster work takes up some of the lunchtime, pupils are well motivated and confident to work independently wherever possible. Without a formal register of gifted and talented pupils, the school is not in a position to analyse their GCSE results although evidence exists that extra revision classes improved these pupils' mathematics grades in 2002. The school sets realistic GCSE targets, based on pupils' Year 9 test results.
8. Standards in Years 10 and 11 are:
 - well above average in English;
 - above average in mathematics art, business studies, geography, music and physical education;
 - average in science, citizenship, design and technology and modern foreign languages;
 - below average in history and ICT.
9. Progress and achievement in Years 10 and 11 are:
 - very good in English;
 - good in mathematics, art, business studies, citizenship, geography, music, modern foreign languages and physical education;
 - satisfactory in science, design and technology and mathematics;
 - unsatisfactory in ICT and history.
10. Standards of **speaking and listening** are high in all years. In many cases pupils listen thoughtfully and give well-wordsed and constructed responses. In all years pupils read very well. They respond to literature with interest and sensitivity. Year 11 pupils produce well-organised and detailed textual criticism. Younger pupils' response to literature is lively, for example when Year 9 examined how effects are achieved in *Frankenstein*. Pupils' **reading** aloud, however, does not reach as high a standard as their literary perception. While most are fluent and accurate, their expression, intonation and awareness of listeners' needs are not so strong.
11. Pupils' **writing** is of an above average standard throughout the school. It is lively and interesting in a variety of genres. Some is very sensitive, occasionally with quite advanced word structures. By Year 9, pupils produce well-controlled, original writing which is usually lively and fluent, with highest attainers writing well-structured work. Spelling, grammar and punctuation are mostly correct. Many middle or lower attainers' writing is too spontaneous - often very much like everyday speech. **Literacy** is encouraged in other subjects. In some there is a helpful focus on key words and subject-specific vocabulary. Pupils are encouraged to discuss, to debate and to deliver talks or other presentations. In a minority of subjects, however, few purposeful opportunities are provided. Reading time is provided for each tutor group, and while some form tutors positively promote reading, much depends on their interest and enthusiasm.
12. Every pupil in a lower attaining Year 8 **mathematics** class, reviewing the properties of quadrilaterals, displayed confidence and enjoyment as they contributed a good range of technically correct terms in discussion; Afro-Caribbean pupils were particularly good at this. Year 10 pupils manipulate algebraic expressions well. Too much work is not linked to topics that are of interest to pupils so that often the wealth of pupils' practical experiences is not used to improve their mathematical understanding. Nevertheless, the teachers' focus on coursework is resulting in very well structured work; some pupils use a good range of data handling techniques to advantage in their statistical investigations.
13. **Numeracy** is developed well in mathematics lessons; pupils competently use calculators and are typically sharp in response to mental questions. In several other subjects work contributes most

effectively to developing pupils' numeracy skills. Pupils draw accurate graphs, manipulate units and understand complex calculations well in science. They cope with scaled drawing and projections competently in design and technology and employ statistical valuations sensibly in geography. In contrast, discussions about symmetry in art are not related to pupils' study of this in mathematics.

14. Pupils learn new practical skills well in **science** and know the stages through an investigation. However, their books show that their progress slows down when they answer leading questions from textbooks rather than explaining conclusions themselves. Class experiments are too structured and guided by teachers, which limits pupils' understanding about experimental method. Higher attainers in Year 10 sharply analyse their observations and use statistics accurately but they have difficulty justifying clearly the methods they use to explain hypotheses. Several pupils have difficulty in identifying flaws and anomalies in results and evaluating conclusions. Teachers do not focus on these skills enough.
15. Standards in **ICT** are below average because pupils in Years 7 to 9 have not had enough lessons and pupils in Years 10 and 11 have no ICT lessons, and it is not offered as a GCSE course. Most Year 7 pupils tend to use one hand or only a few fingers on the keyboard. Year 9 pupils use MS publishing reasonably confidently, inserting clipart and Internet images, and creating text boxes. About half Year 8 pupils have a good grasp of spreadsheets. Most Years 10 and 11 pupils are reasonably skilled at using basic packages such as word processing and spreadsheets. Those that are very competent have mainly practised on their own, as most of them have computers at home. The use of computers in other subjects is described in paragraphs 33 and 149.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

- Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good.
 - Pupils' personal development and relationships are very good.
 - Attendance is above average.
16. During the inspection, several boys observed that the college "really prepares you for the future... it gets you where you want to be in the end... it helps you mature and become a man". Parents are particularly pleased by the way pupils are encouraged to work hard and achieve their best. They comment that their sons enjoy college and make good progress. In most lessons a good working atmosphere is achieved and pupils settle quickly. They are enthusiastic, well motivated and eager to participate in activities or contribute to discussions. During the Founders Day Mass, pupils showed a remarkable degree of respectful attention. There was a minimal amount of restlessness during the long service.
 17. Boys are very supportive of the clubs and other activities which are very well attended. Pupils, particularly the older ones, are very vocal in their support and appreciation of the teachers and the opportunities the college gives them. They feel it is small enough to generate a "Good sense of community... a togetherness...", where "Everybody knows everybody". And they spoke with pride: "Once a Salvo always a Salvo!".
 18. Pupils behave very well in lessons and at lunch and break times. The college's very good provision for moral and social development results in pupils responding in a mature and sensible way. Parents confirm that staff work hard to ensure pupils behave well and the pupils themselves feel that there are few behavioural issues. There is an orderly atmosphere and the boys are well aware of, and abide by the rules and uniform policy. The senior management team is currently reviewing the exclusions policy. Although fixed period and permanent exclusion numbers are high in comparison to similar schools, this is because the college rigorously enforces high expectations of behaviour. In terms of the number of pupils from different ethnic backgrounds, a relatively high percentage of the non-British white and Black Caribbean pupils were excluded in the previous year. The school is very aware of this situation and has reduced the number of exclusions of these two groups in the present academic year. Permanent exclusions are automatically applied for any incidents involving drugs.

19. Pupils are very friendly and polite, happy to talk about what they are doing and help visitors find their way around. Parents and pupils reported that there are few incidents of bullying. If it happens, boys know whom to tell and feel confident that it is sorted out effectively. Relationships are very good, both between staff and pupils, and amongst the pupils themselves. The buddy system is particularly effective in supporting some new boys. Pupils from many different backgrounds mix and work well together, generating an atmosphere of good racial harmony. This has a positive impact on learning and prepares boys well for living in a multi-ethnic society. In physical education lessons pupils co-operate well both in team games or when supporting each other during gymnastic sessions.
20. Boys respond well to the challenges offered, for example on retreats or various different sporting activities. The clear Catholic aims and ethos promote value and respect for each other, reinforced by the staff being very good role models. When used well, form tutors value tutorial time to consult with the boys, monitor their progress and develop their relationship with them. Sometimes this time could be used more effectively, for example to have more time for personal, social and health education (PSHE) and citizenship. In these sessions, pupils share their views and feelings, values and beliefs confidently. Pupils value the time spent with teachers and the confidential one-to-one help they receive in Years 10 and 11. Several pupils have developed very positive relationships with their mentors and value the contact and help received. They feel that it has helped raise their confidence and self-esteem and given them new ways of addressing what they need to do.
21. Pupils willingly take advantage of the many opportunities for them to undertake responsibilities. Pupils undertake their duties conscientiously, for example helping out during Mass, acting as librarians or peer workers, sorting out difficulties or counselling younger boys. The boys know that if they have a good track record they may be chosen to be prefects or senior prefects – roles they undertake with pride. The head boy and deputies are confident and eloquent young men who are a credit to the college. The school and foundation councils provide a voice for pupils to express their opinions and to become involved in the decision-making processes of the college. The head boy and deputies run this very successfully, with other pupils undertaking their roles seriously. Pupils with special educational needs become responsible senior pupils. They are selected as prefects and library monitors.
22. In the best lessons pupils with special educational needs are lively, highly motivated and eager to answer questions. In lessons that are less well prepared, pupils enjoy doing the same work as others and are able to join in practical activities but their progress is marginal. A minority of pupils' needs are not well catered for. For example, pupils who have difficulty sequencing letters and words experience great difficulty copying passages from a board. Pupils enjoy play reading in lunchtime booster sessions. They like role-playing and trying out different voices for different characters. Much serious discussion establishes the right sound for the character in question. One group especially demonstrated quizzical humour when attempting to agree a voice for a female character.
23. Attendance is good and above average. This has been well maintained since the last inspection. The policy of applying detentions for those who are late twice in a week effectively encourages punctuality in the morning, which is generally good. Attendance is well monitored by the college. Registers are taken at the start of the morning and afternoon sessions and by class teachers in each lesson to monitor any potential truancy. Class tutors have a very good rapport with their classes and are using the morning registration period very effectively to provide some reflective time, offering prayers and providing a focus for the day.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

- Teaching and learning are good in all years.
24. Teaching was at least good in over 60 per cent of lessons observed during the inspection. It was very good or better in 26 per cent. This included seven lessons when teaching was excellent:

three in mathematics, two in English, one in geography and one in science. Teaching was satisfactory or better in 95 per cent of lessons. The seven lessons when it was unsatisfactory were mainly taught by non-specialists or teachers who lacked experience or understanding of the National Curriculum. Teaching was most effective in Year 10 and in English, mathematics, business studies and music. It was good or better in four out of five lessons in English, mathematics, science, art, business studies, citizenship, geography, ICT, music, physical education and science. The percentage of at least good teaching was similar to that seen during the previous inspection, but the percentage of unsatisfactory teaching was much lower.

25. A strong feature of most lessons was the very good relationships teachers establish with pupils. Teachers manage pupils very well and rarely have to raise their voices or ask them to settle. In only a very few lessons were pupils inattentive and talkative, so they made too little progress. The music teacher embraces the boys' quirky and sometimes boisterous tendencies and incorporates them into lessons. When boys became over-excited and began to stamp on the floor she responded with delight, took charge as a conductor, made crescendos and diminuendos and brought them humorously and effortlessly to silence.
26. Another major contributory factor to the success of many lessons is the pupils' diligence and enthusiasm. Their capacity for sustained concentration is usually very good. This is particularly apparent in practical lessons where they are attentive, listen well to instructions and to each other and are keen to respond. Even in a few, relatively uninspiring lessons, most boys worked sensibly and kept going to the end. Pupils respond well to the frequent opportunities to undertake personal research, to develop their investigative skills, to evaluate their results and to take responsibility for their own learning. The homework club is well attended; during lunch and break times the library is often full, with boys either catching up on work or e-mailing their work home to complete on their own computers.
27. Apart from the few unsatisfactory lessons explained above, teachers know their subjects well and most convey enthusiasm and interest in them. The art teacher gives careful, controlled explanations of what skill pupils are to practise and generates high expectations of how quickly work will be finished. The design and technology teachers use their experience well to give helpful demonstrations. The French and German teachers use the foreign languages at all times, which establishes good role models for pupils to follow. The physical education teachers' own skills and professionalism help boys to understand techniques, tactics and fitness.
28. Almost all English and mathematics lessons have pace, control and structure, which have further improved as the National Key Stage 3 Strategy has progressively been introduced. Teachers plan very well, with the result that so much is packed into each lesson that all pupils have to concentrate. Brisk introductions, often using mini whiteboards and fast thinking, lead into a good range of activities before summaries at the end. In an excellent science lesson, the opening story about Chinese people living in tents with solar panels meant that pupils were hooked on the following activities about electrical energy. There is already evidence of the Strategy's influence on other subjects, particularly in geography, where an excellent action packed lesson ended with a session of verbal volleyball, or in French, where the same final activity was seen.
29. During the inspection, examples of less effective practice in timing were seen, for example in ICT, when teachers took too long to explain what pupils were doing, so they spent a very short time at the computers. Some English teachers do not leave themselves enough time for the full, shared evaluation, which the Strategy advises should take place at the end of a lesson. Lessons occasionally overrun in art. The success of 100-minute science lessons very much depends on how well the teacher plans and breaks up the time into interesting activities.
30. In a few science lessons teachers rely too much on textbook questions, which do not stimulate pupils to think for themselves. In art, pupils are not in the habit of reviewing their own work regularly as the teacher's directive statements and closed questions do not stimulate independent thought. Pupils do not receive enough guidance about how to make notes and annotate text in history and they lack confidence collecting and presenting their own research data. In a few

physical education lessons, learning was not as good as usual because the teaching was prescriptive and pupils had few opportunities to explore their own ideas.

31. Boys learn particularly well when they are interested in the topic and/or given unusual resources to use. No mirrors were provided to illustrate reflection for Year 9 mathematics pupils but in contrast the significance of the equation of a straight-line graph took on real meaning when the intercept was related to the interception of a football pass. Year 11 pupils enjoyed a GCSE mathematics coursework project using a database about cars but mostly they work on data that neither relates to their experiences, nor develops their concepts of citizenship and social awareness. In citizenship, pupils much enjoyed finding out about the local area on the Internet and the policeman who takes several PSHE lessons makes a point of linking his comments to the boys' experiences. Pupils were not so enthused creating a rather dull table to copy their timetables into in a Year 7 ICT lesson. In English, pupils' response to the teachers carefully selected texts is usually thoughtful and sensitive. In business studies, pupils made very good progress understanding different forms of advertising and marketing in a fast paced lesson. Pupils thoroughly enjoy fieldwork in geography and applying theories they have learned to real situations. Some of the final work is of a high standard.
32. In reality teachers are mostly aware of those pupils who are gifted and talented and they encourage them well. Nevertheless, the school has no formal policy to support gifted and talented pupils and no list of these pupils exists. However, high attainers in mathematics had after school sessions before the Year 9 national tests and GCSEs. In personal and social education, including citizenship, higher and lower attainers are sometimes frustrated if the level of questions on a worksheet is not right for them. In contrast, geography teachers prepare worksheets to suit pupils' different abilities. ICT teachers are not sensitive enough to the wide range of competence and ability pupils have, and planning for work at high levels is not thorough yet. Teachers spot talented pupils in music and physical education and encourage them to attain very high standards, by extension work and/or by joining groups outside the school.
33. Before September 2002 access to computers was so difficult that few departments, apart from business studies, used them. The situation is improving slowly in mathematics, geography and modern foreign languages because teachers in these departments are enthusiastic and knowledgeable and fully aware of the benefits computer programs can bring. The design and technology teachers, using their very recently acquired CAD/CAM technology, are contributing significantly to pupils' overall ICT competence. The music teacher is keen to use ICT, particularly for composing and printing scores, but no suitable equipment is available. Similarly, the art teacher is alert to the benefits of ICT but is frustrated by having a computer with little memory.
34. English marking is always carried out, and at its best it is sensitive, evaluative and detailed, and advises pupils on how they can improve. However, sometimes it is cursory, with randomly distributed ticks. In mathematics, pupils know how well they are doing in relation to national standards, which is good practice. Most science teachers mark work encouragingly but without clearly telling pupils how well they are progressing. The same is true in design and technology and history. When marking is helpful and constructive in English, teachers rarely check whether pupils have followed their advice in later work.
35. The National Key Stage 3 Strategy, especially for literacy and numeracy, has been introduced very effectively, and, while there is still room for further development, it is already having a beneficial impact upon the quality of learning. Teachers in the main have good blackboard/whiteboard skills (although some still do not use joined-up handwriting). In some subjects there is a focus on key words and subject-specific vocabulary which helps pupils as they write and speak. In a minority of subjects, however, few purposeful opportunities are provided, and directive teaching does not allow discussions and shared evaluations. Science teachers develop pupils' numeracy skills purposefully, as do geography teachers, and the mathematics department has taken the initiative on board very successfully.
36. Pupils with special educational needs are well included in lessons and make very good progress. Teachers are mostly aware of the difficulties experienced by these pupils. For example, in a Year

7 top set mathematics lesson, the teacher's tactful well-informed understanding ensured a pupil with an attention disorder succeeded in completing all the work set. Teaching is, rarely, less effective when the teacher has not understood pupils' specific difficulties or does not offer them challenging but different work. During the inspection, a few negative comments in books or reports indicated a teacher's lack of understanding of how to help such pupils succeed. A pupil with a visual impairment joins in fully, for example, following the same gymnastics activities as others in physical education lessons. In other subjects teachers have adapted materials, often in Braille, so the pupil does not miss out on any information.

37. Pupils trust their support assistants who offer tactful and professional help in lessons. Support in lessons is very strong. Often, when identified pupils are working independently, learning support assistants will quietly and effectively help others. Although standards on entry are not significantly different for pupils with English as an additional language, teachers know who these pupils are and keep a careful eye on their progress. Pupils from different ethnic backgrounds all learn equally well.

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

- The quality and range of learning opportunities are good overall and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11.
 - The appropriate statutory curriculum is not fully in place in Years 10 and 11 as the National Curriculum for ICT is not covered fully.
 - Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good.
38. The college provides a good curriculum that helps pupils to become responsible young citizens. An appropriate emphasis is given to religious education as befits the aims and Catholic values of the college. All pupils including those with special educational needs have full access to the National Curriculum subjects. Legal requirements are met except in ICT. Although some improvement has been made since the last report it is still not used enough, nor taught as a discrete subject in Years 10 and 11, so pupils do not develop their skills to the required level. There are very good opportunities for pupils to extend their learning beyond lessons and to cultivate their interests.
39. In Years 7 to 9, the curriculum is boosted by pupils studying French and German in Years 7 and 8 and by Japanese classes at lunchtime and after school. The latter are much appreciated by about 20 pupils who are beginning to work towards a qualification. The college has successfully focused on implementing the National Key Stage 3 Strategy for English and mathematics. The time allocated to these subjects in Years 7 to 9 reflects a determination to raise standards of literacy and numeracy. So far, this has resulted in improvements in spelling and reading and in the provision of more practical activities for boys who, as one Year 9 pupil said, enjoy "trying new things".
40. In Years 10 and 11, pupils follow a traditional curriculum and can take up to 10 GCSEs. In addition to the core subjects, pupils select from options that include humanities, arts, music and business studies – about half of them choose the latter. Most pupils take double science and a few take the three separate sciences by having extra lessons after school. Pupils with special educational need are well supported individually and can do option studies if they so wish, instead of one GCSE. They can choose to take Certificates of Achievement in English and mathematics. The college also organises a sensible alternative course if necessary. One boy is presently benefiting from a two-day practical ICT course at a local college. For those less academically orientated, vocational subjects are still limited. The college is aware of this and is currently reviewing curriculum choices at the end of Year 9. Time allocation for science in Year 11 is limited but being increased next year.

41. Relationships with partner institutions are good. Pupils progress smoothly through different stages of their education because the college liaises well with its primary schools and Saint Dominic's Sixth Form college. In 2002, 97 per cent of pupils went on to further education courses. The college uses information received from primary schools effectively to identify learning difficulties and to place pupils in ability sets in certain subjects. This helps pupils to make progress and contributes to the standards they attain. The majority of departments plan work well. For example, in Years 7 to 9, pupils are taught drama in English lessons. The department has carefully chosen a GCSE English syllabus which includes drama and media studies so that pupils continue to make progress in this area.

42. Since the last report, better provision has been made for PSHE although the weekly tutorial slot is too short for topics to be considered in depth. The course incorporates citizenship and careers and is taught in all years through well-planned schemes of work. It has strong links with religious education. Sex, health and drugs education is taught through religious education, science, and PSHE. Topics such as bullying, and drugs abuse provide opportunities for pupils to think critically and develop their values. The college makes good use of visiting speakers from the community to reinforce messages in lessons and assemblies, for example, the community policeman, local business people, and the Diesel actor group. [This course is described further in paragraphs 118 to 120 and 123.]
43. Careers education is good and taught well. It begins in Year 9 and sensibly prepares boys for lifelong learning and for the likelihood of career changes during their working lives. A careers adviser works closely with the college to help pupils to make informed choices about GCSE subjects and gives good advice about what is available in further education or after they leave college. Pupils find the taster day at the sixth form college and the industry day at college helpful. They also appreciate the effectively organised fortnight's work experience in Year 10. Through the latter, the college has established valuable links with local businesses.
44. Curricular provision for pupils with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language is very good. Pupils benefit from in-class support, small withdrawal groups and targeted booster work for younger pupils who are identified early on as needing help. Option studies for GCSE pupils means they get the help with all their subjects and achieve the best exam results possible. Extra time in the lunch hour and after school reinforces learning, revision and help with homework. Very well focused assistance in withdrawal groups gives opportunities for repetition and revision of key work, which would not be appropriate in subject lessons. Careful help in lessons ensures pupils succeed in the company of their peers without feeling different.
45. In Year 8, a successful English withdrawal group, following the same curriculum as others, focused on punctuation, developing an ideas network and reading aloud successfully in a small group. Work completed was of a good quality. Where pupils are fully supported by a learning support assistant they can achieve equally with their peers. For example, in science a pupil could describe the experiment and its purpose, and gave a good example of the meaning of energy. In English a Year 9 pupil who speaks English as an additional language put up his hand and answered questions confidently. In a lunchtime homework club one pupil with English as an additional language took the opportunity to discuss his progress with the special educational needs co-ordinator. After a sensitive discussion the pupil expressed his thanks. Provision to raise the performance of gifted and talented pupils is unsophisticated and at an early stage of development.
46. Links with the community are good and contribute to pupils' education. Strong links with the local and wider community through the church help pupils to develop their social and moral responsibilities. The school council (described in detail in paragraphs 121 and 122) plays an active role in charity fund raising. Christian Aid for Overseas Development has awarded it a certificate in recognition of its efforts. During the inspection, pupils packaged Christmas hampers for the elderly and needy in the parish.
47. The college provides a rich and interesting diet of activities outside the school day in which large numbers of pupils participate. Sport is a real strength. Daily and weekend, individual and team sporting activities are very good. Year 7 are Harrow football champions and Year 11 the winners of the Harrow Cup 7-a-side rugby. There is a range of subject clinics, cultural clubs, where pupils play chess for example, visits and field trips. Musical activities, which are not as wide as might be expected, include the choir, Rock band, and a brass ensemble. Too few pupils are involved in music outside lessons. Drama productions are well supported. Modern foreign language days help pupils to speak more fluently. Religious retreats help to enrich their personal lives. A notable feature is the Wider Horizons Week in the summer term when the timetable is suspended and pupils sample different activities, ranging from residentials for water sports and languages in France and Germany to day visits to theatres, museums and other places of interest.

48. There is an abundance of very good provision for pupils' spiritual development. Governors, senior managers and staff give careful thought to the rich and pervasive Catholic life of the college and to pupils' faith journeys. Pupils speak comfortably and respectfully about the religious character of the college. Though most are Catholic, pupils of other faiths are welcomed. All Years 7 and 8 pupils take part in an annual day retreat and around one in five Years 9 to 11 pupils choose to take part in the three-day residential retreat. "A great place to have fun and find your spiritual self", commented a Year 11 pupil. The head of religious education reported that teachers had carefully considered whether or not to allow a disaffected pupil on retreat. Their decision to include him had benefited the pupil, who responded well and went on to achieve higher than predicted examination results.
49. Pupils find some of the teaching inspirational and uplifting. Mathematics teachers perceive and convey the beauty of their subject. A Year 9 English class listened in transfixed silence to a teacher's outstandingly skilful reading of a piece about an IRA execution. The teacher's empathy was transmitted to pupils, who responded with sensitivity. Year 7 pupils were very excited by the experience of seeing aerial photos of the local area; their interest leading to a valuable and informative discussion about the relationship between the college and the Salvatorians.
50. The quality of assemblies observed during the inspection was variable. The Founder's Day Mass held in the church was a happy experience as many boys were involved and their behaviour was exemplary. The Year 9 liturgy, also in the church, generated a good reflective ethos and many boys participated thoughtfully. The chaplain summed up the link between the collection of hampers for the elderly and less fortunate members of the community very well. In contrast, the Year 10's assembly lacked warmth. The college hall is unattractively decorated with poor quality displays and the piano is out of tune. As boys entered the hall, a teacher raised his voice with repeated commands so the service did not get off to a good start. A pupil read from the Bible and another said a prayer but other than this, pupils were not fully involved as the atmosphere lacked warmth. This assembly, and another Year 8 one, did not convey the same high spiritual expectations generated in the church.
51. Provision for moral and social development is very good. Pupils speak highly of the peer mentoring and pastoral systems. Unpleasant, antisocial behaviour is rare, and if it does occur it is dealt with effectively. Relationships between all members of the community are harmonious. One pupil commented that: "all the pupils are friendly and can be trusted". In a citizenship lesson, Year 10 pupils talked with maturity and openness about situations that caused them stress. They shared sensitive and carefully considered advice about how to cope with the moral dilemmas they face.
52. Pupils feel secure in and around the college and they value the rich variety and high quality of support systems, both formal and informal, that the college community offers. In class, pupils work well in pairs and small groups, listening well to each other, discussing aspects of their work and making decisions together. Pupils are generally articulate, well-mannered and confident, and they talk confidently with adults. The prefect system is effective and taken seriously by pupils. Prefects talk with pride about the training they receive for their role. Prefects on study leave came into college during the inspection week to carry out their duties. Pupils' social skills and sense of social responsibility are extended by their involvement in the pupil council, the "Wider Horizons" programme, and charitable activities. Behaviour is generally very good. However occasionally pupils misbehave with new or inexperienced teachers. Opportunities for team-work are provided by the rich sporting programme.
53. The strong Catholic life of the college gives pupils an important perspective on European culture. It offers them a secure and intelligible cultural foundation from which they can deepen their own participation in the many and diverse elements of European culture. As pupils acquire a deeper understanding of Catholic culture, whether or not it is their own, they also gain insight into the culture and customs of others and they become more tolerant of cultural differences and more respectful of others. In a religious education lesson pupils took pleasure in imagining themselves at a traditional Jewish Passover meal, sampling the foods with fascination and reading from the Haggadah.

54. Staff, pupils and parents all agreed that there is virtually no racism or racist behaviour at the college. A long-term governor commented upon the improved atmosphere in the college as it has become more multi-cultural in recent years. Cultural provision is good. Teachers' planning of lessons and extra-curricular activities takes account of the opportunities for extending pupils' cultural awareness. Pupils enjoy the modern language department's theme days and the developing programme of overseas visits. However the college does not have a strong reading culture and pupils' cultural development is also hampered by the low status of performing arts, especially music.

HOW WELL DOES THE COLLEGE CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

- Procedures for child protection and ensuring pupils' welfare are very good.
 - Monitoring of pupils' academic performance and personal development is good.
 - Procedures to provide for pupils' educational and personal support and guidance are very good.
55. The college continues to provide a very caring and supportive environment where pupils can flourish. Parents speak highly of the care and commitment of staff and how each pupil is treated as an individual. A number of parents feel the caring ethos to be one of the college's major strengths. There is a very effective pastoral system in place. Form tutors, subject specialists and the heads of year know their pupils very well and act quickly when they see a need. The college actively seeks to ensure that pupils have equal opportunities, including those with special educational needs and English as an additional language. This works well through the very good support systems in place.
56. Procedures for monitoring and promoting discipline and good behaviour are very good and contribute effectively to the good levels of behaviour. The behaviour policy is comprehensive, offering clear guidelines and procedures for promoting good behaviour and dealing with any unsatisfactory or disruptive behaviour. The college is currently reviewing and clarifying its approach to exclusions. There is a good balance of rewards and sanctions, and staff are generally consistent in how they apply them. Pupils are consulted through the school council and they have helped develop the reward system. This has recently led to the decision to present a new plaque and cup for Year 7 pupils. The boys generally value the reward system and the various different certificates and prize giving ceremonies, which they feel motivate them to work hard and behave well.
57. The well-structured tutor group arrangements and close contact of the heads of years and mentors provides considerable backup and support. The effective collation and analysis of data means tracking does support pupils' academic and personal development. These systems are well used to identify and record good effort and achievement or the development of personal skills, as well as picking up any incidents of unsatisfactory behaviour. Tutors write home to share these achievements or concerns with parents. By sharing information teachers reinforce the parents' partnership with the college and pupils' progress is recognised and praised. Information relating to pupils' successes is also included in their Records of Achievement.
58. Procedures for monitoring and eliminating oppressive behaviour are very good. The college operates a 'telling' culture and takes the issue of bullying seriously and addresses it through assemblies, PSHE lessons and tutor times. Older pupils are trained to act as peer workers and are available to counsel younger pupils who may have problems. Pupils do not consider bullying to be a major problem in the college.
59. Parents are kept well informed regarding their responsibilities for ensuring pupils attend college regularly and arrive promptly, and the need to inform the college if their child is unwell and unable to attend. The setting up of a parents' line encourages them to call in if their son is going to be away, otherwise parents are contacted by the college on the first day of absence to reduce absence and truanting. The college has effectively introduced a number of good incentives to

encourage 100 per cent attendance. Very good links have been established with the education social worker. She visits the college each week to speak with the heads of year and follow up on any incidents.

60. The deputy head with responsibility for pastoral issues is the members of staff with designated responsibilities for child protection. She is suitably trained, and well aware of the processes involved including the recent changes in legislation. Other members of staff are also aware of child protection procedures through regular in-service training. Welfare assistants follow well-established systems for taking care of pupils who may fall ill during the day, and they effectively meet pupils' medical needs. Enough staff are qualified to provide first aid treatment. The college has good links with the various support agencies and these specialists attend as necessary.
61. The health and safety policy is comprehensive, both for pupils in college or out on visits. The headteacher and health and safety governor undertake regular health and safety checks and risk assessments, as well as reviewing the security arrangements. Departments generally undertake risk assessments regularly. The governors take their responsibility for health and safety issues seriously. During the inspection week there was a concern about a gas leak one day. Although it took some time to identify the cause of the leak – probably due to recent refurbishment work – the college followed appropriate safety procedures in alerting the relevant organisations to deal with the problem.
62. The use of assessment information is satisfactory overall. The senior management team analyse data very well, highlighting areas of the curriculum where pupils are under-performing and taking management decisions about what needs to be done. In contrast, several heads of department do not interpret data rigorously enough. Pupils with special educational needs are identified early and follow, for example, booster programmes which very effectively target improvement of their literacy skills. At regular intervals, the deputy head collects information from departments about pupils with special educational needs' academic progress. Individual education plans support pupils' special needs. They have a good format and relevant information is easily accessible. Targets are specific and indicate high expectations. Regular review ensures continued challenge. Statement reviews effectively inform all those involved about how the pupil is achieving against the statement objectives. Pupils are included in their review well and they have good opportunities to consider their progress, discuss their special needs and negotiate new targets. Assessment data is also analysed effectively to check that pupils with English as an additional language achieve as well as they should.
63. Although most teachers are aware of pupils with particular talents or abilities, monitoring of their progress and attainment is not methodical, as these pupils are not identified as a group. Assessment is carried out well, and the results interpreted usefully in English, mathematics, art, geography, ICT, modern foreign languages, physical education and business studies. Its use in history is unsatisfactory. In all years, pupils' social achievements are fully assessed, particularly so they can complete their Record of Achievement in Years 10 and 11. The religious education department and the school chaplain effectively monitor the spiritual development of pupils.

HOW WELL DOES THE COLLEGE WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

- Parents' views of the college and the effectiveness of the college's links with parents are very good.
 - The impact of parents' involvement on the work of the college is very good.
64. Teachers work hard to foster strong links and effective liaison with parents. Several fathers give strong support because they attended the college themselves. The large number of parents who responded to the questionnaire, and the few who attended the parents' meeting, had very positive views about the college. They felt that there had been considerable improvements since the last inspection and that it is well led and managed. Parents feel that teaching is good and they are comfortable approaching the college if they have problems or questions. The inspection team agrees with the parents' positive comments.

65. Parents have very few areas of concern. There were conflicting views regarding the amount and quality of homework given and some parents felt there was insufficient challenge for higher attaining pupils. The inspectors felt that homework was used effectively but agreed that sometimes the work was too easy for these boys. Whilst some parents were not convinced that the college provided an interesting range of activities outside lessons, the inspection team considered, taking into account the retreats and wide range of activities offered during the Wider Horizons Week, that the range of extra-curricular activities offered is very good. The most significant criticism from the parents relates to the lack of lockers for all pupils and their concerns that boys have to carry heavy bags around all day. This has been a concern for a long time and at last the governors are taking it seriously, by finding out how it can be resolved within the confines of the limited space available.
66. The range and quality of information provided for parents are very good. The attractive prospectus and governors' annual reports provide comprehensive information about the college and its activities. However these documents do not include all the prescribed information, such as examination results with national comparison figures. Parents are kept fully informed about what is going on, on a regular basis, receiving helpful information on the curriculum, GCSE options choices and regular newsletters. The college provides many opportunities for parents to contact or meet with staff and discover what is going on or discuss their son's education. Open meetings, consultations about national tests, careers evenings and occasional workshops are held to keep parents updated. Parents feel fully involved in the life of the college and many attend drama productions and special masses.
67. Opportunities for parents to become involved in their son's learning are developed very effectively. Parents are consulted over a number of issues, such as mobile phones and drugs, using questionnaires or consultation evenings. A few parents have also been consulted about items in the school development plan. The home/college agreement is signed when pupils join the college and parents use the pupils' link books most effectively to maintain day-to-day contact. Useful formal annual review evenings are well attended by parents and pupils. Parents find the annual reports helpful and constructive and they particularly value the interim reports showing effort and attainment grades and targets for the next year.
68. The quality of reports and the information for parents of pupils with special educational needs is also very good. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are fully involved in their children's education and progress. Attendance at reviews is good and they are enthusiastic and supportive about their children's attendance at revision classes. Many make use of a welcoming atmosphere to discuss issues and concerns with the special educational needs co-ordinator either in person or by telephone. All targets are agreed with parents who have a positive input into their child's individual education plans. English as an additional language pupils are highly motivated, well included and say they and their parents feel both welcomed and valued. Parents from all ethnic backgrounds share the same positive views about the college and are delighted with the racial harmony that exists.
69. The impact of parents' involvement on the work of the college is very good. They provide valuable financial support through the college fund, which helps to support and sponsor a number of activities and events. Parental contributions also pay to transport pupils to the sports field and in some years they have covered the cost of textbooks, for instance in science. The college often draws upon the expertise and contacts parents have, receiving their help to find work placements or careers interviews or advice. The enthusiastic involvement of parents through the friends association is valuable. Each year parents and staff organise a large number of social and fund-raising events. Parents funded the cost of a minibus and are now looking to cover the cost of improving the playground and some of the major rebuilding project costs. On a practical level parents have also offered their expertise, for example helping with the technology department's refurbishment.

HOW WELL IS THE COLLEGE LED AND MANAGED?

- The leadership and management of the headteacher and key staff are good.
- Overall the governing body fulfils its responsibilities well.
- The college monitors and evaluates its performance well and takes effective action.
- The strategic use of resources, including specific grant and other funding is good.

- The principles of best value are applied well and the school provides good value for money.
 - Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory.
70. The headteacher has a calm, thoughtful style of leadership, which generates respect from all members of the college community. He is quite clear how he wants the college to develop, and appreciates that the considerable strengths of its Catholic roots need to be nurtured, at the same time as moving forward. A governor described the headteacher as an activator, but also as a good listener who is prepared to change his mind in the light of debate and different points of view. The governors' strong support for the headteacher and senior managers is a real strength, as is the college's approach to all its staff. All members are valued and respected, reflected in the unusual, but heartening, alphabetical list of employees where technicians, for example, have the same status as heads of department.
71. The headteacher is most ably supported by two deputy heads, and a senior teacher, the first three appointed since the last inspection. Occasionally other key members of staff, for example the special educational needs co-ordinator, attend their meetings, which is good practice. The senior managers' different backgrounds complement each other and they work well as a leadership team. They, and the cheerful, hard working administration staff, make sure that the day-to-day organisation and management of the college is smooth. The layer of middle managers is more variable in its quality but there are several very good heads of department and heads of year who lead their teams well, and several recently appointed ones who have made fine progress.
72. The governing body serves willingly and attendance at meetings is very good. Governors fulfil their responsibilities well and are astute about most of the college's strengths and areas for improvement. They bring a good range of experience, for example in the civil service, the church, and particularly in education, to their deliberations and they question the headteacher confidently. They are proud of the college's approach to the multi-racial and multi-cultural dimensions of society. The college's race equality policy is a sensitive and thoughtful document, fully reflected in practice by the racial harmony that exists. Governors are enthusiastic about attending training and many comment on the valuable day they spent recently, discussing the college's mission statement and future direction.
73. The governing body is not involved enough with how the college is dealing with the National Key Stage 3 Strategy. A few are aware that literacy and numeracy teaching methods have evolved over the last year and that the head of English is involved with the LEA on this, but they are not aware of the details and have not probed whether standards are improving. Neither has the governing body, acknowledging that "music is the poor relation" and "a subject which is marginalised", done anything to alter this situation. They are aware of the deficiencies in ICT but have not yet brought this area in line with national figures. Acknowledging that the college is a smaller than average secondary school, its spending on ICT in the previous year was less than two-thirds of the average for all secondary schools.
74. Self-review is well developed in many areas and all extra input is both monitored and evaluated. For example, analysis of literacy booster work in Year 7 included an evaluation of a control group which did not receive extra help. It showed that progress in this group was less than the targeted group, clearly justifying the extra support given. Departments evaluate how they have performed and blend their comments into their future plans, which feed into the college development plan. This is a realistic and slim, practical document. The leadership team is fully aware of the areas needing improvement but progress is slow in some areas, for example in departments using ICT or dealing with the considerable practical problems in music. Teachers complete questionnaires on whole school issues, which is good practice, for example analysing the success of the learning support department. A strong team of learning support assistants is well managed by the special educational needs co-ordinator. They receive in-service training and are well informed and supportive.
75. The size of the college means that departments such as art, ICT and music have one full-time specialist, who can teach the majority of lessons, with a few lessons left over. These are mainly

taught by non-specialists, which is not satisfactory as they do not teach as well as specialists. Apart from this problem, teachers are well qualified, with a good mix of ages, experience, and gender. Their professional development is taken seriously and is worthwhile, and performance management is well established. The technicians, catering and administrative staff contribute much to the smooth running of the college and they are also encouraged to attend courses and training. The special educational needs co-ordinator manages support for pupils with English as an additional language. She is well aware of these pupils educational needs and successfully focuses on boosting their vocabulary and understanding of English. The quality of support is well recorded and catch-up programmes are very effective.

76. Overall, the standard of accommodation is unsatisfactory, particularly in the following areas:
- music, because the main teaching room is next to the school hall and cannot be used during examination periods. The instrumental practice room is not suitable for its purpose.
 - classrooms are not close together, significantly in English, modern foreign languages and music and this makes co-ordinating teaching difficult.
 - lack of space in art, especially for storage.
 - the layout of computers in the learning resource centre is good for independent research but not good for teaching.
 - on-site facilities for physical education are very limited although pupils have access to good quality community playing fields and the local leisure centre, but travel takes up lesson time.
 - access for wheelchairs is unsatisfactory.
 - food technology and drama are not on the curriculum because the college has no specialist accommodation.
77. The college has identified these deficiencies and a development strategy has been drawn up to address them. The college is making a well-prepared submission for capital grant funding. There has been improvement since the last inspection, for example, the recent commissioning of two new geography classrooms and a technology annexe. Other improvements include the refurbishment of the library to make the learning resource centre and the creation of a dedicated careers library and new administration building. In some areas the quality of the environment is helped by the displays of pupils' work.
78. The proportion of the school budget allocated to resources, which are unsatisfactory overall, is below the national average. There are enough textbooks and consumable materials in a number of subjects, but shortages in several important areas, particularly too few textbooks in science, history, modern foreign languages and physical education. The learning resource centre is well managed; it is equipped with 30 new computers, but the stock of library books is low for the number of pupils and there is too little fiction. The newly commissioned careers library provides pupils with good, up-to-date reference material. There has been considerable investment in ICT since the last inspection, but provision within many subjects is limited. The overall ratio of pupils to computers is well below the national average of six to one. Many subjects make effective use of outside resources to enhance pupils' learning. These include language residentials in France and Germany; visits to art galleries, theatres and museums; architectural tours and field study work in Wales.
79. The college has a systematic approach to financial management and planning. Spending decisions are closely linked to the priorities for improvement. The headteacher, in collaboration with the chair of the governors' finance committee, efficiently manages the college's financial planning. The newly appointed school manager is still getting to grips with his role. Financial decisions, building work and various claw backs have resulted in the need to run a tight break even budget for this year, drawing on the college's previous reserves. Income relating to the increased number of pupils on roll has been delayed. This has resulted in a number of cutbacks such as in the allocation of money for departments and their spending on resources. The college successfully runs its catering service as a business, generating an additional source of income. The private fund is used effectively to support and sponsor some college activities.

80. The college makes good use of specific grant moneys and ensures that they are used for their designated purpose, such as the funds delegated to support pupils with special educational needs; these pupils make very good progress. The college applies appropriate value for money criteria and the principles of best value to its spending decisions. Considerable time and effort has gone into raising funds for the college's ambitious building programme. Good systems are in place to ensure the cost effectiveness of the goods and services that the college purchases and several quotations are obtained for major items of expenditure before decisions are made. Recommendations in recent financial audits have been acted upon, and the good support offered from the finance officer ensures that all departments are kept adequately informed and suitably updated about the college budget. The college office is well run and provides a positive welcome for visitors.
81. Progress in the years following the last inspection was slow, but it speeded up in 2000 when the present headteacher arrived. Most departments now analyse data about standards, which they use to set targets, identify underachievement and analyse, for example, by ethnicity. Progress has been made in ICT, with better schemes of work, assessment in Years 7 to 9, more computers and the opening of the learning resource centre. Nevertheless, the college still has much to do to bring its provision for ICT in line with most secondary schools. Personal and social education, now incorporating citizenship, has weekly lessons and the content of these is carefully planned. The numerous minor areas for improvement have mainly been dealt with. Parents feel that the college has improved recently and overall progress since the last inspection has been satisfactory. The headteacher and the senior management team are now well established and systems are in place for progress in the future to be stronger.

WHAT SHOULD THE COLLEGE DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

82. In order to maintain improvement, governors and senior management should:
- (1) **Boost the status of music** (*paragraphs 33, 73, 74 and 160 to 164*) by:
 - establishing a permanent music room;
 - buying more instruments;
 - improving the ICT hardware and software;
 - encouraging more regular, extra-curricular musical activities.
 - (2) **Continue to improve provision for ICT** (*paragraphs 33, 73, 74 and 145 to 152*) by:
 - reviewing how the subject is organised and managed at senior and middle management level;
 - teaching the full National Curriculum programmes of study, in Years 10 and 11, either through discrete lessons or specified subjects;
 - ensuring all subjects meet their National Curriculum requirement to use ICT effectively;
 - increasing the pupil/computer ratio to nearer the national average (6:1);
 - supporting non-specialist teachers better and planning to have more specialists as soon as possible.
 - (3) **Raise standards in history** (*paragraphs 139 to 144*) by:
 - making sure that all areas of the National Curriculum are covered in depth;
 - strengthening the quality of assessment so pupils know exactly how well they are doing;
 - improving leadership and management and the overall quality of teaching.
 - (4) **Persevere with efforts to extend the accommodation and improve resources** (*paragraphs 76 to 78*) by:
 - grouping together classrooms, especially for English and modern foreign languages;
 - increasing the amount of storage space in art;
 - reviewing the layout and distribution of computers in the college;
 - considering, for the long-term, whether space could be found to teach food technology and drama;
 - persevering with all efforts to raise capital sums to improve accommodation;

- purchasing more textbooks in science, history, modern foreign languages and physical education.

In addition to the issues above, the governors and senior management should consider the following for inclusion in the action plan:

- (1) completing a register of gifted and talented pupils and introducing specific programmes and activities for them (*paragraphs 7, 32, 45, 63*);
- (2) focusing on raising the number of A and A* grades at GCSE (*paragraphs 108 and 139*);
- (3) considering the use of tutor time (*paragraphs 11, 20, 42 and 118*):
 - whether it could be used more effectively to deliver the personal and social education and citizenship courses and
 - evaluating whether the three tutor sessions a week which are used for silent reading are generating a real culture of reading for enjoyment and interest.

PART C: COLLEGE DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	129
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	47

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Years 7 – 11							
Number	7	26	47	42	7	0	0
Percentage	5.5	20	36	33	5.5	0	0

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

Information about the college's pupils

Pupils on the college's roll	Y7 to 11
Number of pupils on the college's roll	655
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free college meals	75

Special educational needs	Y7 to 11
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	11
Number of pupils on the college's special educational needs register	38

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	54

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the college other than at the usual time of first admission	1
Pupils who left the college other than at the usual time of leaving	22

Attendance

Authorised absence

College 20001-2002 National 2000-2001

Unauthorised absence

College 20001-2002 National 2000-2001

College data	7.5
National comparative data	8.1

College data	0.4
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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	141	0	141

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	123	116	124
	Girls			
	Total	123	116	124
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	College	85 (82)	81 (77)	86 (79)
	National	66 (65)	67 (66)	66 (66)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	College	40 (49)	53 (43)	46 (48)
	National	32 (31)	45 (43)	33 (34)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	95	118	104
	Girls			
	Total	95	118	104
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	College	66 (76)	82 (77)	72 (82)
	National	67 (65)	70 (68)	67 (64)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	College	20 (24)	55 (43)	21 (48)
	National	32 (31)	44 (42)	34 (33)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	106	0	106

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	55	103	105
	Girls			
	Total	55	103	105
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	College	53 (58)	97 (95)	98 (95)
	National	51 (48)	89 (91)	95 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average capped point score per pupil	College	37.2

	National	34.6
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Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	404	9	0
White – Irish	2	0	0
White – any other White background	83	29	4
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	0	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	5	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Indian	17	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	14	1	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	47	12	2
Black or Black British – African	48	9	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	5	1	1
Chinese	0	0	0
Any other ethnic group	29	3	2
No ethnic group recorded	0	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Financial information

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 to 11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	39.6
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	18

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7 to Y11

Total number of education support staff	10
Total aggregate hours worked per week	281.5

Deployment of teachers: Y7 to Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	71
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Average teaching group size: Y7 to Y11

Financial year	2001-2002
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	£
Total income	2,143,250
Total expenditure	2,277,781
Expenditure per pupil	3,698
Balance brought forward from previous year	166,450
Balance carried forward to next year	31,919

Key Stage 3	25.8
Key Stage 4	21.7

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	16
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	15

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	3
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	3
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	655
Number of questionnaires returned	310

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes college.	54	39	5	1	0
My child is making good progress in college.	45	49	3	1	3
Behaviour in the college is good.	39	53	5	1	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	28	55	11	3	3
The teaching is good.	41	54	2	0	4
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	38	45	11	1	4
I would feel comfortable about approaching the college with questions or a problem.	57	37	2	2	1
The college expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	63	35	2	0	0
The college works closely with parents.	39	48	8	1	4
The college is well led and managed.	51	42	2	1	4
The college is helping my child become mature and responsible.	48	47	3	1	1
The college provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	38	41	6	3	11

PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES

ENGLISH

Overall, the quality of provision in English is **very good**.

Strengths

- Very good teaching, learning and progress.
- Well above average standards.
- Very strong leadership and management.
- The very successful introduction of the National Literacy Strategy.
- Pupils' strong motivation and their relationships with their teachers have a very positive effect upon their learning.

Areas for improvement

- Target setting is not detailed and frequent enough, and the quality of marking is inconsistent. Pupils need to know, evaluate and judge their progress, and understand what they must do to improve.
- A culture of reading, to support literacy, is not yet well established. Teachers cannot easily lend books to pupils which will interest and motivate them because the stock is low.

83. Year 9 2002 test results were well above average. In GCSE 70 per cent of pupils attained grades A*- C in English, and 84 per cent in English literature, both well above average. Since the last inspection, there has been a steady increase in standards and good levels of achievement and progress from year to year. This is principally because of good teaching, evident at the time of the last inspection, and most pupils' high motivation. Present standards are well above average. The last inspection noted that the library facilities were good and that they had a positive impact on pupils' reading: this is no longer the case. There has been little progress in pupils' use of ICT. The report suggested that the department should plan for pupils to take a more active role in lessons: there have been considerable developments in this direction, but there is further to go in shared evaluations of progress.
84. Pupils' speaking and listening standards are high in all years. Because of the good relationships pupils usually listen carefully and respectfully. In many cases they are thoughtful and analytical, giving well-ordered and constructed responses. Sometimes younger pupils' enthusiasm is so great that control is sometimes forgotten, but this is a very understandable shortcoming. More structured and focused speaking was seen in a Year 10 lesson, on *To Kill a Mockingbird*, where pupils shared good ideas about the text in response to the teacher's quick-fire questions. In another lesson they discussed in pairs the ways in which the producers of publicity leaflets seek to influence us. In both situations there was evidence of well considered and ordered speaking.
85. In all years pupils read very well. They respond to literature with interest and sensitivity, seen in their analyses of plays like *Educating Rita* or poems by John Clare and Christina Rossetti. Year 11 pupils produce well-organised and detailed textual criticism which shows real understanding of the authors' intentions and how they achieved them. This insight was also evident when Year 10 boys discussed Martin Luther King's famous "Dream" speech: even though they knew the text well and the lesson lacked imagination, they showed a warm appreciation of the strength of the speech and how this was achieved. Younger pupils' response to literature is even more lively, for example when Year 7 acted their own versions of incidents from *A Christmas Carol* or Year 9 examined how effects are achieved in *Frankenstein*. Pupils' reading aloud, however, does not reach as high a standard as their literary perception. While most are fluent and accurate, their expression, intonation and awareness of listeners' needs are not so strong. In the *Christmas Carol* enactments, for example, pupils' lack of knowledge about basic stagecraft made the audience's task difficult, as often the message was not communicated as the actors' backs were turned.

86. Pupils' writing is of an above average standard when they enter Year 7, and throughout the school. Their writing is lively and interesting in a variety of genres, such as narratives, accounts, drama, rhyming and non-rhyming poetry. Some of it is very sensitive, occasionally showing quite advanced word structures, like the Year 7 imaginary visions in rhyming couplets, called *I saw*. By Year 9, pupils produce well controlled, original writing which is usually lively and fluent, with the highest attainers writing well structured and carefully extended work. Spelling, grammar and punctuation are mostly correct, and it is clear that some thought and drafting goes into the finished article.
87. For many middle or lower attainers, the besetting problem is of a lack of control: expression is spontaneous. The result may be lively, but it is often very much like everyday speech - chatty and informal. This problem persists further up the school, and greater reflection would avoid some contorted English. Nevertheless, a significant number of higher attainers will achieve the highest grades in both English and in English Literature. There is no difference in the quality of work produced by pupils of different ethnic backgrounds and all achieve very well.
88. Pupils make very good progress through the school, with a continuous rising line from above average to well above average attainment. This improvement owes a great deal to the very high quality of pupils' learning, which is because they behave well and are interested and enthusiastic. Their enjoyment of English, and their very good relationships combine to make most lessons very successful and effective. In many lessons pupils' engagement with what they were doing was particularly noticeable, enhancing the quality, and accelerating the speed, of their learning.
89. The other very strong influence is the very good teaching. Two lessons were satisfactory and the rest were at least good, and over half were very good or excellent. Almost all lessons have pace, control and structure, which have further improved as the National Literacy Strategy has progressively been introduced. Teachers plan very well, with the result that so much is packed into each lesson that all pupils have to concentrate. However, some teachers do not leave themselves enough time for the full, shared evaluation, which the Strategy advises should take place at the end of a lesson. Teachers know their pupils very well and set appropriate work for their differing levels. This means that pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language enjoy the same quality of learning and make similar progress. Further very effective support is provided in the catch-up programme run by the head of department.
90. Formal assessment of progress is regular and thorough in terms of tests. Marking is always carried out, and at its best it is sensitive, evaluative and detailed, and advises pupils on how they can improve. However, sometimes it is cursory, with randomly distributed ticks. A few comments are not helpful, lacking specific advice about development: "Some good points. You need to be more fluent". When marking is helpful and constructive, teachers rarely check whether the advice they have given has been followed in subsequent work. Target setting is not detailed and frequent enough. Pupils need to know, evaluate and judge their progress, and understand what they must do to improve. The school acknowledges this as an area for development as the National Literacy Strategy increases in its impact on learning.
91. The National Literacy Strategy has been introduced very effectively, and, while there is still room for further development, it is already having a beneficial impact upon the quality of learning. Literacy is encouraged in other subjects. Teachers in the main have good blackboard/whiteboard skills (although some still do not use joined-up handwriting). In some subjects there is a focus on key words and subject-specific vocabulary which helps pupils as they write and speak. References to literacy are built into all lesson planning, and pupils are able to discuss, to debate and to deliver talks or other presentations. In a minority of subjects, however, few purposeful opportunities are provided, and directive teaching does not allow discussions and shared evaluations. Reading time is provided for each tutor group, and while some form tutors positive promote reading, much depends on their interests and enthusiasms.
92. Leadership and management are very good. An outstanding head of department has accomplished a great deal. She has an accurate perception of the strengths and weaknesses of

the current provision and a very clear vision for the future. In spite of staffing changes which have made management difficult, she has seized the opportunities provided by the National Literacy Strategy with great enthusiasm and understanding of its potential, and has led its introduction very effectively. Teachers are well informed and guided by the very good written curriculum documentation, which provides the best opportunities for good learning. ICT, however, features infrequently, because of the limited supply of computers and difficult access to them. The fiction stock in the learning resource centre is unusually small. The stock of books which English teachers can easily lend to pupils is thin, except where, commendably, teachers have brought their own books in. Thus chances to spread the pleasure of reading and improve literacy are lost. The possibility of sharing reading book is hampered by the department's scattered, and some non-specialist, rooms.

MATHEMATICS

Overall, the quality of provision in mathematics is **good**.

Strengths

- Very good planning with steps which ensure that pupils learn with understanding and achieve well in the Year 9 national tests.
- Excellent relationships between pupils, teachers and classroom assistants, in an inspiring mathematical environment, support pupils' learning.
- A well managed department; teachers industriously and enthusiastically help pupils to do their best.

Areas for improvement

- Teachers have begun, and should continue, to share their best practice to benefit all pupils' learning.
- Teachers use too few examples which reflect pupils' interests.

93. Standards in all years are above average. In Years 7 to 9, most pupils do better than boys nationally. In 2002 over 80 per cent reached level 5, well above average, and the percentage attaining at least level 6 was above average. During the inspection Year 9 pupils worked at similarly high levels. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, successfully experience some challenging mathematics. Pupils' work is marked so that they know how well they are doing in relation to national standards. Teachers are responding well to the annual improvement in primary school standards, by adopting similar teaching styles which are increasing pupils' competence. Pupils in Years 7 and 8 are progressing rapidly as a result of the up-to-date course which is taught well. Pupils in other years are making at least satisfactory progress.
94. In 2002 the percentage of pupils attaining GCSE grades A*/A rose to 11 per cent, which is good, but the A*-C percentage dipped to the national average. Year 11 pupils are currently working at least to the standard of the previous year. The school's focus on coursework is resulting in very well structured work; some pupils have used ICT skills and a good range of data handling techniques to advantage in their statistical investigations.
95. Overall standards of teaching are good with many lessons promoting very good and excellent learning by Years 7 to 9 pupils. Teaching, using modern textbooks in Years 7 and 8, together with careful monitoring of progress, is instrumental in raising standards. Teachers plan lessons very well, start with a brisk introduction which leads into a well-focused, stimulating range of activities before a conclusion; learning is further developed as understanding of topics unfolds in later lessons. Teachers generally use resources very effectively. An excellent example was when every pupil in a lower attaining Year 8 class, reviewing the properties of quadrilaterals, was engaged by using mini white boards. They extended their understanding of area by considering projections of shapes on a screen. They displayed confidence and enjoyment as they contributed

a good range of technically correct terms in discussion; Afro-Caribbean pupils were particularly good at this.

96. Understanding would be even better if teachers referred more often to topics which pupils find relevant and interesting. Year 10 pupils manipulated algebraic expressions well, but a familiar context, such as relationship to area and perimeter, was not introduced. No mirrors were provided to illustrate reflection for Year 9 pupils. In contrast the significance of the equation of a straight-line graph took on real meaning when the intercept was related to the interception of a football pass. Year 11 pupils enjoyed a GCSE coursework project using a database about cars but mostly they work on data that neither relates to their experiences, nor develops their concepts of citizenship and social awareness. In a lesson on probability, pupils enjoyed a novel approach using the letters spelling 'Mississippi'. They learned well and made pertinent observations about probability differences according to whether letters were replaced or not.
97. Numeracy is developed well in mathematics lessons; pupils competently use calculators and are typically sharp in response to mental questions. Well-planned teaching in other subjects also develops numeracy skills effectively:
- in science pupils manipulate units well, draw accurate graphs to record results and they understand calculations for electrical circuits and chemical equations;
 - by using scaled drawings and projections pupils' spatial skills are extended competently in design and technology;
 - in geography pupils analyse primary fieldwork data carefully using statistical techniques which some older pupils extend to calculation of correlation coefficients;
 - sports studies pupils make succinct judgements when they interpret fitness graphs;
 - text analysis identifying pattern is carried out in English;
 - money, dates and calculations are a feature of French lessons.
- In contrast, discussions about symmetry in art are not related to pupils' study of this in mathematics. Mathematics teachers participate in whole school initiatives, such as the modern foreign language day, but generally the wealth of pupils' practical experiences is not used to improve mathematical understanding. Use of computers has been planned but their availability is inadequate to support this aspect of pupils' learning.
98. An excellent range of pupils' work, including textures and Braille, such as investigations, inspiring development of patterns and imaginative posters, is displayed in the mathematics rooms. The very good relations between pupils, their teachers and classroom assistants, mean that all pupils learn confidently. Following their teachers' example of clear, technically correct explanations, pupils are well equipped to outline their thinking to peers competently and to discuss collaboratively.
99. The Key Stage 3 strategy is being implemented energetically; as a direct result, better learning and progress are evident. Teachers give generously of their time with daily lunchtime mathematics clinics for individual support. More pupils could benefit by attending them. Extra, after school support for the higher attainers, before the 2002 Year 9 national tests and GCSE examinations, successfully raised the higher standards and booster classes raised the percentage of Year 9 pupils attaining level 5. Practical arrangements for teaching and organising catch up lessons for lower attaining Year 7 pupils lack continuity and these lessons are not equally accessible to all pupils who need them. The department is addressing this issue.
100. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. Management and planning, by the relatively new team of enthusiastic mathematics teachers, is a strength with each taking on significant responsibilities. Weekly planning and management meetings are effectively influencing standards. Pupils would learn more effectively if all teachers adopted the very best practices. The reasons for a drop in GCSE standards in 2002 have been identified and action has been taken to improve the quality of coursework. Very encouraging year-on-year improvement is being recorded in the school's annual test results for Years 7 to 9. The team has the potential to carry forward these improvements to GCSE.

SCIENCE

Overall, the quality of provision for science is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Well above average test results at the end of Year 9 with a notable number of pupils attaining level 7.
- Pupils' considerable enthusiasm and interest.
- Excellent features of teaching enrich pupils' learning. These merit being shared within the department.
- The good learning and development of numeracy, particularly calculation skills.

Areas for improvement

- Achievement in Years 10 and 11 where standards are only average.
- A lack of intellectual challenge in several lessons.
- Pupils' investigation skills are not developed fully during class experiments.
- Pupils do not have targets which focus on learning particular aspects of science.
- When teachers mark books they do not highlight progress and what needs to be improved.

101. Year 9 test results have been above or well above average in recent years. They were well above average compared with national and boys' results in 2001 and better in 2002, when a notable number of pupils attained level 7. GCSE grades A*-C results were broadly average in 2001, a significant improvement on 1999 results, which were well below average. The 2001 average points score was similar to the national figure for boys. Standards dipped slightly in double science in 2002, partly because a small cohort of 12 pupils studied the three separate sciences. All achieved grades A*-C in chemistry (one pupil gained A* and five, grade A) and none less than grade D in biology and physics.
102. Overall standards in Year 9 are above average and improving as progress is good. Pupils learn new practical skills well, for example successfully observing microscopic structures of their own cells in Year 7, and then carrying out experiments with light waves in Year 8. Books show how regularly and well pupils apply their numeracy skills in calculations, for example for the density of an irregular object to find out why it floats in Year 7, and the thermal value of a chemical reaction in Year 9. Books also show that progress slows down when pupils answer leading questions from textbooks rather than explaining conclusions themselves. Class experiments are too structured and guided by teachers, which limits pupils' understanding about experimental method.
103. Standards in Year 11 are average and achievement overall is satisfactory. There are significant variations in this picture. Investigating invertebrates in a river, higher attainers sharply analysed their observations and accurately used statistics to glean evidence about distribution. They had difficulty justifying clearly the methods they used to explain hypotheses. All pupils know the stages through an investigation but several have difficulty in identifying flaws and anomalies in results and evaluating conclusions. Teachers do not focus on these skills enough. Analyses rarely refer to fundamental ideas about science. Progress noticeably dwindles in the long double lessons, although the quality of pupils' learning, about different waves, was very good throughout a Year 10 lesson because it had been effectively planned. There is scope for reviewing setting arrangements where pupils underachieve because the work is too easy.
104. The quality of teaching is good overall, ranging from excellent to satisfactory. It is most effective in Years 7 to 9. This is reflected in the quality of pupils' learning. Adept questioning led low attainers in Year 9 to make large leaps in their learning, for example about the chemistry of metals. A teacher's infectious enthusiasm deepened the quality of Year 7's learning about cellular structures. Pupils learning is also substantially linked to their own superb attitudes, which endure through occasionally unstimulating lessons. Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress and they contribute worthwhile observations to lessons because of good quality extra support.

105. Excellent teaching, seen in one lesson, makes learning science memorable. It immediately grips pupils' attention and holds it. Year 7 began a lesson fascinated by a story about Chinese people living in a tent with solar panels, capturing light energy to make electricity. Pupils cheered the story's ending, where the sun went down, the light faded, so... no homework!! Captured, they speedily became involved in different activities about electrical energy. They were left in no doubt about resistance when, as 'light bulbs,' they prevented their tough teacher (current) passing through a class 'circuit' and, in reflecting about their learning, enjoyed scoring more points than him in an interesting ending to the lesson.
106. Certain aspects impoverish learning: dull planning, too much guidance, a pace which slows down as lessons proceed and omission of imaginative, constructive beginnings and endings to lessons. Pupils who learn more quickly than others are not challenged enough. Most teachers mark work encouragingly but not all give clear indications about how well pupils are progressing. The best practice gives pupils 'cause for thought' in encouraging further progress, but checks that such comments have been acted upon are not done routinely.
107. The department is well led and managed. Improvements have been made since the last inspection. Pupils use computers more, although there are too few in the laboratories and access to others is restricted. There are too few textbooks, particularly for Year 10. The department is beginning to evaluate its own performance, although is not yet used to identifying specific learning targets for individual pupils. Although behind schedule, the department plan is rightly focused on monitoring teaching and learning through class work. A clearer management structure could speed the raising of standards. Preparation areas are well organised and strong technical support significantly helps pupils to develop their practical skills.

ART

Overall, the quality of provision in art is **good**.

Strengths

- Above average standards.
- Good progress, especially for pupils with special educational needs.
- High expectations - pupils produce good creative work in two and three dimensions.
- Good leadership which establishes a positive ethos.

Areas for improvement

- Pupils are not involved enough in, and do not always understand, how their progress is assessed, particularly in Years 7 to 9.
- ICT is not used frequently enough although it has developed recently.
- Report writing does not clearly tell pupils and parents about the progress pupils have made towards specific objectives.
- The accommodation is not totally satisfactory.

108. Most pupils enter the school with average standards. Only a few have weak observation skills or undeveloped knowledge of mixing colours. By the end of Year 9 all pupils realise their ideas and create bold, interesting images in two and three dimensions. Their standard of work is above average overall. About one in five who take GCSE attain exceptionally high standards at the end of Year 9. High standards are maintained in Years 10 and 11. The art department has a tradition of good and improving GCSE results, both compared with national averages and other college subjects. In 2002, 80 per cent of pupils attained GCSE grades A*-C. The percentage of A*/A grades is slightly below average. Increasing numbers of pupils choose this subject for GCSE, with two groups now in Years 10 and 11. Pupils make good progress. Those with special educational needs are well included and all pass GCSE.
109. In Years 7 to 9, carefully chosen projects develop pupils' understanding, of how ideas evolve into realisation, well. Working on a flight project, linked with Leonardo da Vinci's sketches, pupils

discuss, consider and modify designs to make successful balsa wood planes and kites. However, they do not regularly review their work on their own – this is not yet established as good practice. The teacher's closed questions and directive statements do not always encourage pupils to know how to modify and improve their work independently. Years 10 and 11 pupils' progress is apparent as lessons follow a sequence from idea and design to realisation. Year 11 pupils' colourful, complex paintings of architecture contain detailed and powerful visual images. In Year 10, examining Francis Bacon's work, pupils use computer graphics to distort digital photographs of their faces. Most pupils' figure drawing from flat copy is good, just a few reflect less close observation. Although pupils articulate their choices and decisions, for example one pupil spoke with interest about replicating Rembrandt's techniques with a digital pen, many of their sketches are undated and lack evaluative comments.

110. The majority of teaching is good with many strengths. The teacher plans well, states each lesson's objectives clearly and shows pupils how to achieve them. This is done by careful, controlled explanations, so pupils focus on the skill to be practised. Years 7 to 9 pupils do interesting studies which extend their understanding of how compositions in two dimensions can represent three dimensions. Symmetrical drawing, using African masks as the starting point, teaches pupils the techniques of blending chalk and charcoal and the dramatic effect of stark black and white images. The teacher generates high expectations, expects all pupils to complete work and sets homework which continues the lesson sequence and prepares pupils for the next one. As a result, pupils learn well and are well motivated and enjoy the subject. The teacher formally assesses and records the outcome of each project but does not, neither in marking or reports, give pupils enough analysis of how well they have done, nor suggestions for improvement.
111. Pupils' work is displayed on every possible art room surface; for example very effective layered paintings, cut outs, drawings using icons and ideas to illustrate personal identities, and brightly coloured Toby jugs showing effective extension of portraits. Just a small minority of teaching is poorly planned and during the inspection one unsatisfactory lesson was taught by a non-specialist. A few lessons overrun, so there is not time to review and consolidate what has been learned, and literacy skills are not always emphasised enough.
112. Pupils experience painting, collage, printmaking and clay work. They very effectively make papier-mâché portraits of solid, but distorted faces. Pupils demonstrate their creativity and depth of thought, for example, creating a frame first and then designing a picture for it. The spiritual element of the curriculum is implied rather than explicit in planning. A project looking at the work of Brother Benedict and artwork in the chapel stimulated pupils to produce some thoughtful paper stained glass windows, exhibited in the dining hall. Pupils' wider experience of the arts is developing – GCSE pupils have been on sketching trips and visits to the Tate Modern. The practical improvement of drawing skills in Year 11 was as a direct result of the employment of a model from Harrow Arts Centre. A start has been made using ICT as a creative tool and the Internet for research, and GCSE pupils also have access to a digital camera and the Adobe Photoshop programme.
113. The department is well managed overall with strengths and some areas for improvement. Since the last inspection leadership continues to be strong and results have improved. However, the number of pupils choosing GCSE art has increased. This has implications for timetabling, staffing and organisation if high standards are to be maintained. A few lessons are not well organised and support for non-specialist teachers is not secure. The lively and vibrant art room, which has too little storage space, is in danger of becoming stifled. It is dusty, with cobwebs, old furniture and too few working spaces for larger groups. It is not satisfactory to teach art in an English room once a week, especially if the lesson is not well prepared in advance.

BUSINESS STUDIES

Overall, the quality of provision in GCSE business studies is **good**.

Strengths

- Pupils achieve well.
- The very good teaching is varied and challenging.
- ICT is used effectively in lessons and coursework.

Areas for improvement

- The range of outside business links is not well developed.

114. In past years, GCSE results have been consistently above national average with over 60 per cent of pupils attaining grades A*-C and almost all passing. Standards were lower in 2002 though still average, which represented good achievement for most pupils. Present standards are above national average. In their coursework pupils demonstrate a secure understanding of the key terms and higher attaining pupils apply ideas and theory when analysing a business problem. A significant feature of much of the work is pupils' effective use of ICT to present their findings.
115. Most pupils make good progress and achieve well. This is largely the result of very strong teaching that sets high expectations about the quality and quantity of work. In a Year 10 lesson for example, pupils worked hard in groups as part of a project involving setting up and promoting a business enterprise. Pupils showed very good progress in understanding types of business ownership and different forms of advertising and marketing. The teaching is very good because lessons are varied and fast paced and make good use of ICT for class activities, presentations and coursework. There is a strong emphasis on pupils doing research, some of it collaborative, and some for well considered homework.
116. Until recently, the subject leader also worked with a local bank in running a school bank. This has temporarily been suspended so overall links with local businesses are not well developed in an otherwise strong provision. The subject has been well managed over a number of years and is a very popular and successful GCSE option.

CITIZENSHIP

Overall, the quality of provision in citizenship is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Some well-planned discrete topics delivered through the personal and social education lessons.
- The successful, well-established and effective college council. Through this all pupils learn to appreciate the importance of electing representatives and democratic decisions.

Areas for improvement

- The incomplete, but developing, audit of when citizenship is covered in other subjects.
- Too little citizenship is taught in Year 11.
- Limited consideration has been given to how pupils' knowledge of citizenship will be assessed.
- The same worksheets are used regardless of pupils' different abilities.

117. Almost a term into this new subject, pupils attain average standards in their knowledge and understanding. Topics in the personal and social education programme have been developed and new ones incorporated, so there are now well considered units prepared for Years 7 to 10, but only one for Year 11, which is not enough. Several sections of the materials used have been written, many of them during the previous year, by Salvatorian staff, so the college already has experience of covering several of the key citizenship elements. One stimulating Year 7 exercise is ranking definitions of what citizenship is about. Pupils certainly find this interesting and thought provoking.
118. Also in Year 7, pupils use the Internet to understand more about their local area and consider their own impact on the environment. In later sessions they consider equal opportunities and human rights. It was clear from the lessons observed, that the 35 minute slot available is too short, as, whether researching on the Internet or debating a key topic, pupils need more time to

get fully involved. Nevertheless, overall pupils in Years 7 to 10 make good progress and find the topics covered interesting.

119. A community policeman teaches several topics, such as stamping out prejudice and racism in Year 8, the need for rules and law in Year 9, and crime in Year 10. Pupils respect his contributions, which have a significant impact on their knowledge and understanding. Year 8 pupils state confidently: "We've done racism, cultures, stereotypes, and racism in sport". Pupils appreciate the importance of these topics to their present and future lives. The policeman analyses pupils' responses with a careful blend of friendly advice, and clear instructions and reminders about the law. In another Year 8 class, pupils from different ethnic backgrounds happily contributed to their own experiences.
120. Form tutors teach the personal and social education and citizenship course, so inevitably the quality of teaching varies because teachers' interest, confidence and knowledge is a key element. Several lessons seen were interesting and thoughtful, with good pace and pupils being fully involved. Some healthy debates about stress and how to cope with it were observed in Year 10. In other lessons, the fact that pupils all tackled the same questions had an impact on higher and lower attainers – the work was either too easy or too difficult. Overall, the teaching seen was predominantly good and always satisfactory.
121. The school council is successful, well-established and effective. Pupils learn to appreciate the importance of electing representatives and democratic decisions. Each form elects two members to sit on its year council, from which two representatives go forward to the school council. All this complements the Year 8 citizenship topic on learning through elections. An unusual, but most effective idea, is that those who have finished their term of office on the school council can stay on to work as foundation members, sharing their expertise and experience with new members.
122. The school council has achieved several successes, for example introducing large bowls of flowers into the entrance area, and recently, choosing benches for the playground, in memory of a pupil who sadly died in the previous academic year. The council has raised money to support a 14 year-old in Haiti, and, nearer to home, to decorate the dining room and hall for Christmas. A couple of school council prefects have worked with the local authority and other schools to debate major issues related to education and citizenship, which is very good experience for them.
123. Last year an audit of how all other subjects contribute to pupils' knowledge of citizenship was completed, but the information collected was not detailed enough to be helpful, so a more specific overview has started. The new co-ordinator receives support from several experienced teachers. She is enthusiastically working hard to complete the subject audit, which will reveal any minor areas of this subject which need further consideration. Religious education, taught to all pupils in all years, covers many important topics, such as human rights and tolerance of different faiths. Geography work in Years 7 to 9 includes consideration of sustainability, poverty in the less developed world and several environmental issues. The co-ordinator is fully aware of the assessment requirements for citizenship, which will be developed by building on evaluation exercises used within the course.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

Overall, the quality of provision in is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Pupils are responding well to the recent curriculum changes and most make progress in their knowledge and skills.
- ICT resources have improved significantly, especially in CAD/CAM, largely as a result of the commitment of staff and parents.
- The new head of department has made a good start in developing the curriculum and methods of assessment.

Areas for improvement

- Although teaching is consistently satisfactory, on occasion it lacks variety and pace.
- Assessment practice is not always clear in telling pupils about their progress against national standards.
- The school has not addressed the previous report issue of improving pupils' design and technology experience by introducing food technology.

124. Standards in Years 7 to 9 are average, which represents an improvement over recent teacher reported levels, explained by better resources and recent curriculum changes which have improved the learning programmes. GCSE results have fluctuated considerably in recent years and in 2002 they were below average, though broadly in line for boys nationally. Boys have tended to do less well in design and technology compared with their performances in other subjects. Standards in Years 10 and 11 are now average and better than the 2002 results.
125. Years 7 to 9 pupils can cut and join wood, acrylic and metal materials with some accuracy and they use finishing techniques well to obtain a worthwhile product. The changes in the curriculum have helped most pupils to have a sound knowledge of material properties and equipment, though their understanding of electronic systems is more limited. Pupils' awareness of design is also less developed, particularly so for lower attaining pupils who are less confident in researching and expressing ideas.
126. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 now make satisfactory progress as their writing has improved, as well as their ability to produce good graphical images of their planned designs. This progress has been most evident for those pupils with special educational needs. These improvements have been the result of better ICT and computer-aided design facilities. The improved graphics teaching means that pupils are now more confident using their different drawing skills, which means the work in their folders is better.
127. Most pupils can work through a design and make process. Higher attaining pupils in graphic products demonstrate considerable strengths in researching and presenting their design ideas. Lower attaining pupils, particularly in resistant materials, have less awareness of the need to address a design problem but most are able to carry out relevant research and plan their work. Strengths in how fundamental knowledge and use of ICT is taught have also improved pupils' designing and planning; they show care and accuracy in their made objects.
128. Overall, most pupils in Years 10 and 11 make satisfactory progress. In a Year 10 graphic products class on architectural design, pupils were well supported to develop their drawing and rendering skills as well as to use ICT to produce promotional materials. In a Year 10 resistant materials lesson, the stronger teaching focus on engineering skills helped pupils to make progress using metal lathes and a wider range of tools to make a pin clamp.
129. Teaching is satisfactory overall with over a third of good and very good practice. All teachers are specialists and use their knowledge and experience well in demonstrations and individual pupil support. These strengths contribute to pupils developing sound practical, graphical and ICT skills and sustain pupils' interest and involvement in their design and make activities. Lessons, particularly those taken by non-specialist supply staff, are often well supported by the very good technician. The very good teaching is well planned, varied and challenging because it consolidates and extends pupils' knowledge and skills through a range of exemplars, stimulus materials and effective questioning. Consequently pupils are well focused and lessons proceed at pace. In a number of otherwise satisfactory lessons, pupils are less clear about the learning targets and, by pursuing just one activity during a lesson, the pace of learning slows and gifted and talented pupils are not challenged enough.
130. The new head of department has made a good start in his leadership and is committed to improving the curriculum, further developing teaching and learning, and raising standards. He is well supported by an experienced team which, despite modest school funding, has worked hard to develop the resources and accommodation. Much of this has contributed to a growing strength in ICT and graphics, including computer-aided design. Assessment practice helps staff to

monitor progress and their judgements are sound. However teachers do not always clearly tell pupils about their progress against national standards. The department has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection and the current improvements and developing strengths promise well for the future. However, the school has not yet addressed a concern in the last inspection report about the lack of opportunity for pupils to experience food technology.

GEOGRAPHY

Overall, the quality of provision in geography is **good**.

Strengths

- Consistently above average standards.
- Pupils achieve well.
- Good, interesting teaching overall.
- Very good leadership and management.

Areas for improvement

- Inconsistencies in Years 7 to 9 teaching because there is no structured programme to support teachers who are not familiar with the National Curriculum.

131. By the end of Year 9 the majority of pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve above average standards and make good progress from their starting point, an improvement since the last inspection. The overall effectiveness of planning is good as it provides interesting and practical activities that appeal to boys. As a result, the majority of pupils learn very well. They learn more slowly in some Year 8 lessons because the teacher is unfamiliar with the National Curriculum.
132. Geography is a popular subject taken by about four-fifths of pupils in Years 10 and 11. Since the last inspection GCSE results have improved and remained consistently above average. This is explained by successful planning with a good emphasis on practical coursework, effective assessment, and the success of revision classes after school and in the holidays. Pupils perform well in relation to their ability and many do better in geography than their other subjects. Results were well above average in 2001, with 78 per cent A*-C grades and still just above average in 2002 with almost 60 per cent A*-C grades; one group did not do as well as the others because it was taught by several teachers, including a non-specialist. Ethnic minority pupils achieve well.
133. Pupils have good skills and quickly develop a sense of place. Year 7 pupils interpreted and labelled an aerial photograph well because, by using a photograph of the school and surrounding area, the teacher aroused their curiosity. Skilful questions helped them to identify and classify different features and to build up a picture of the land use. Most pupils follow structured research enquiries well, for example, about volcanoes and earthquakes. However teachers provide too few opportunities for pupils, particularly higher attainers, to devise their own questions and follow them through logically to a conclusion. Most understand geographical patterns, processes and environmental issues well.
134. Teachers teach basic geographical skills well and use numeracy effectively for practical work. Pupils are beginning to use ICT well, both for presentation and research. Most write well at length because of the way teachers structure work thereby helping them to extend their vocabulary, learn to find information and organise their ideas. Home-produced worksheets support below average pupils and also help above average pupils to extend their ideas. In work about Euro Disney, above average and average pupils clearly understood the factors influencing the location of a theme park and below average pupils could identify and explain the major factors.
135. Standards in Year 11 work are above average and pupils make good progress, building effectively on earlier work, and because of their own positive attitudes. Their vocabulary and map and information retrieval skills improve and most use technical terms correctly and remember what they have learnt previously. In essays, high attainers gave good accounts of the physical impact of rivers on people. Fieldwork in South Wales or the local area is a strength. Pupils enjoy applying what they know to investigations. In work about Blaenafon, for example, above average pupils clearly understood the causes of industrial decline, relating practice well to theory, reaching valid conclusions, and suggesting ideas for further research. They used numeracy well to test their results for significance. Average pupils linked practice to

theory but were less evaluative. Below average pupils collected and tabulated data carefully and made some attempt at analysis. The well-presented word-processed projects show initiative and pride. With the exception of coursework, ICT is not used enough.

136. Overall, teaching is good with excellent features. It was most consistent in Year 10 where teachers use their knowledge well to plan lessons that encourage pupils to think critically and for themselves. A few lessons were over directed and the teachers' methods did not encourage sharing ideas. In about half, summing up at the end was too short. Homework is especially helpful for GCSE pupils but incomplete work is not always followed up. Teaching was unsatisfactory in two lessons. The teacher did not explain instructions clearly, and could not refocus pupils quickly enough when they were talking, or when a few of them were uncooperative.
137. Teaching in a third of lessons was very good or excellent, the latter exemplified in a Year 10 migration lesson. The teacher planned well-organised, short, practical tasks which became more intellectually demanding. A brisk starter involved pupils in reconstructing a sentence which focused them on the aim. A variety of stimulating activities followed that extended their knowledge and understanding, with animated paired work and skilfully led class discussion. Sensible seating arrangements and well-adapted materials helped below average and special educational needs pupils to take an active part. They spoke clearly and confidently. The teacher's skilful intervention kept everyone well focused. Written work and an enjoyable game of "verbal volleyball" at the end tested and consolidated pupils' understanding.
138. Leadership and management are very good and good progress has been made in addressing the issues in the last report. Teachers are enthusiastic and committed to the aims of the college. The department makes a good contribution to all aspects of pupils' personal and social development. The head of department is very supportive to new teachers and those experiencing difficulties. There is no structured programme to help new teachers who are not familiar with the National Curriculum. This is recognised as an area for attention. Resources, with the exception of the books in the library, are adequate. Accommodation, although well organised with lively displays, is barely satisfactory because the rooms are small for larger classes, making practical work difficult.

HISTORY

Overall, the quality of provision in is **unsatisfactory**.

Strengths

- Recently improved teaching plans, which now cover all elements of the National Curriculum.

Areas for improvement

- Below average standards and progress in all years.
- Unsatisfactory leadership and management which does not generate challenging expectations, especially for higher attaining pupils. Pupils are not helped to become independent learners.
- Assessment is not used effectively so pupils are not aware of the standards they have achieved and what they need to do to improve.
- There are too few resources, especially books.

139. Standards are below average in all years. GCSE results were above average in 2000 but dropped considerably in the next two years, to well below average in 2002, when only 32 per cent of pupils attained grades A*-C. Few pupils attain A*/A grades and standards for higher attainers have remained below average since the last inspection. Teachers have low expectations and fail to provide enough challenge and support for average and higher attaining pupils. Staffing problems last year had an impact of standards because pupils had a succession of short-term teachers and were not adequately supported in their GCSE coursework.

140. Years 10 and 11 pupils, especially higher attainers, do not make enough progress. Year 11 pupils can outline the events of D-Day in 1944 as part of the allied landings in Normandy. They use historical evidence to assess events from the past but lack confidence collecting and presenting their own research data. Teachers do not help them to learn independently. Pupils are knowledgeable about several sections of the syllabus but find it difficult to analyse historical evidence within a wider context and thus draw out conclusions.
141. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 do not achieve enough. Year 9 pupils can identify some of the significant changes made to the monoplane by the Dutchman, Fokker and begin to understand how these technological changes made an impact on the conduct of the air war 1914-1918 but overall their depth of knowledge is not good. Present Year 9 pupils have not studied all elements of the National Curriculum. They have not been taught about a non-European and a European society before 1900 and their study of British history between 1750 and 1900 was superficial, with little reference to the growth of Britain as a trading and imperial power during this period. A new scheme of work has been introduced, which remedies most of the gaps, and this will benefit Years 7 and 8 pupils. A good new unit of work has been devised for Year 9 pupils in the future, when they will interrogate census data for Coalbrookdale.
142. The quality of teaching and learning over time is unsatisfactory because of the incomplete schemes of work which guided teaching over the past three years. Teaching during the inspection was satisfactory overall, with some good teaching in Year 8 and some unsatisfactory teaching in Year 10. Teaching has improved because the department has received advice and support and because a permanent specialist teacher has been appointed. This has improved matters but it is too recent to have made a full impact on teaching and learning. The knowledgeable teachers plan lessons well, establish good relationships with pupils and share their enthusiasm for the subject with them. As a result, pupils are confident about what they are expected to do, well motivated and enjoy their learning. Nevertheless, some work is still pitched at too low a level, particularly for higher attaining pupils.
143. Years 7 to 9 pupils now collect information from videos and textbooks to answer structured questions reasonably well. Teachers give pupils good guidance on how to write longer answers but they do not help them to read effectively, by showing them how to annotate texts and take notes for research. The lack of these skills was noted in the last inspection report. All pupils have a copy of the same textbook, with only different worksheets, not texts, for higher or lower attainers. They use computers well to word process and are encouraged to gather information from the Internet. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well, because of the help support assistants and teachers give them. Teachers have not identified those gifted pupils who need extra work.
144. The leadership and management are unsatisfactory as they have failed to raise standards in the last two years. Assessment, criticised in the last report, and marking are not used effectively so pupils are not aware of the standards they have achieved and what they need to do to improve. Monitoring and evaluation of teaching in the past has not managed to raise standards and the department's development plans do not focus on this as a top priority. Standards have fallen since the last inspection and several issues identified then have not improved, although ICT is now used quite well. Overall improvement since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory.

INFORMATION COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Overall, the quality of provision in ICT is **unsatisfactory**.

Strengths

- Good specialist teaching in the majority of Years 7 to 9 lessons. In these lessons pupils attain average standards.
- Pupils are well motivated and enjoy working on computers. They help each other sensibly.
- The increased number of computers in the learning resource centre is very good for pupils to work

independently. The design and technology CAD/CAM programs contribute significantly to pupils' overall ICT competence.

Areas for improvement

- The National Curriculum is not taught in Years 10 and 11, either through discrete lessons or through planned coverage in other subjects. The use of ICT in other subjects is patchy in all years resulting in below average standards.
- Improvements in ICT have taken place, but from such a low base that standards remain below average in all years and the number of computers is still low.
- The learning resource centre layout is not suitable for class teaching. The distribution of computers around the school is not as effective as it could be.
- The ICT co-ordinator has too many responsibilities and overall leadership of this major area does not have a high enough profile.

145. Standards are below average because pupils in Years 7 to 9 have had few lessons and pupils in Years 10 and 11 have no ICT lessons, and it is not offered as a GCSE course. Teacher assessments of standards at the end of Year 9 in 2002 rightly showed below average attainment, with less than half the pupils reaching level 5. This term, Year 7 pupils have only worked at the computers for a few lessons because they did not have passwords to get onto the college's network. They comment that they do not feel they have made much progress and some of them add that the work is not hard enough.
146. Waiting to use the computers, Year 7 studied issues related to the use of modern technology in society, business and the home. They had a short session practising typing skills, but most of them tend to use one hand or only a few fingers. The college does not methodically assess what pupils have mastered in primary school. It seems that many have had limited experience and enter the college with below average standards and a lack of competence in basic skills. Although progress in most lessons in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory, achievement over time is not.
147. Year 9 pupils use MS publishing reasonably confidently, inserting clipart and Internet images, and creating text boxes. About half of Year 8 pupils have a good grasp of spreadsheets using them for realistic projects, for example calculating the costs of a house extension. In one Year 7 lesson, the work done was well below average. Pupils created a table to copy their timetable into; not a very exciting task towards the end of the autumn term. In a Year 8 lesson, too many pupils were tackling word processing tasks that they could already do, whilst a few struggled to cope with changing font sizes and needed guidance. Both these lessons were taught by competent, but non-specialist teachers, who simply pitched the work at too easy a level overall, and lacked the confidence to cope with the wide range of abilities pupils had.
148. Teaching is satisfactory overall, but it ranges from unsatisfactory to good. In a few lessons teachers spend too long telling pupils what they are going to do, and then recapping at the end, so the total time spent working at the computers is less than half the lesson. The specialist teaching is effective. The teacher decides where pupils sit, and then skilfully supports their different abilities by giving them the right amount of help for them to make progress. She generates confidence and enjoyment and moves around the learning resource centre fast, so that pupils stay alert and focused.
149. Years 10 and 11 pupils did have ICT lessons in Years 7 to 9, although a minority is not skilled at using basic packages such as word processing and spreadsheets. Those that are very competent have mainly practised on their own, as most of them have computers at home. In Year 11 books examined during the inspection, there was little evidence that subjects use ICT, although many pupils prepare their coursework on computers and produce neat, well-presented documents, particularly in science, geography and physical education. Higher attainers, for example, made good use of graphics to display their analysis of sports performance information.
150. The ICT co-ordinator has not mapped out where other subjects are using ICT, because before September 2002 access to computers was so difficult that few departments used them. The one computer in the music room is too old to be of any use and the art department cannot install a recently purchased animation programme as its computer does not have enough memory.

Nevertheless, there are encouraging signs:

- the design and technology department has very recently acquired CAD/CAM technology and this is being used very well and contributing significantly to pupils' overall ICT competence;
- the art department makes limited use of Adobe Photoshop and has recently acquired a digital camera;
- the geography department uses ICT well for a weathering enquiry in Year 8 and simple data presentation, Internet research and desk top publishing in other years;
- pupils occasionally prepare PowerPoint presentations in history;
- the modern foreign languages department has some valuable software which it hopes to use once a week. Year 10 pupils were observed using these programmes most effectively in German;
- the mathematics department is enthusiastic about using computers, although in reality each class uses them once a term at the most, and half Year 8 do not have this experience.

151. The schemes of work for Years 7 to 9 show what will be covered each week and make it clear what the pupils are meant to learn and be able to do by the end of each unit. There is no identification of how ICT can support pupils' literacy, numeracy, citizenship, social and cultural development. Work at the higher National Curriculum levels is not included, for example solving problems and testing hypotheses at level 6 or systems development at level 7. The learning resource centre opened in Spring 2001. It has enough computers for all pupils in a class, but they are not laid out in a helpful way for teaching: they are in circles round three pillars and in a separate area around a corner. The distribution of other computers around the school has not followed a master plan, so although several departments have one computer in a few rooms, this does not really help to raise pupils' access and experience.

152. The ICT co-ordinator has too many responsibilities and overall leadership of this major area does not have a high enough profile. She is also responsible for the business department. She does not have enough time, particularly without technical support on site, to lead the development of ICT further, support less confident non-specialist teachers and monitor and gain an overview of when other departments do use computers. In the circumstances, she manages the ICT lessons in Years 7 to 9 well. The governors and senior managers may appreciate the enormous amount of work that has to be covered in ICT, which should grow in the future, but they have not created enough posts of responsibility to match this.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

French and German

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

Strengths

- Good teaching which is raising standards and helping pupils to achieve well.
- Teachers use the foreign language extensively in most lessons.
- The department contributes well to pupils' moral, social and cultural development.
- The head of department provides very good leadership and management and is supported by a committed team.

Areas for improvement

- Inconsistency in teaching styles.
- Too few pupils use the foreign language to ask for help and a few pupils' pronunciation is too anglicised.

153. The percentage of pupils attaining GCSE grades A*-C in 2001 was below average in French and close to average in German; in both languages results were above those for boys nationally. The percentage attaining A*- G grades was just below average in French and above in German. With more pupils taking each language, French results were the same in 2002 but German ones were better. Over one in ten pupils who took French attained A*/A grades, and slightly more in German. The trend over the last four years shows a gradual improvement in French and a significant improvement in German.
154. Standards by the end of Year 9 are average in both languages, although before this term German began in Year 8, with only one lesson per week. German now starts in Year 7, with the same number of lessons as French. Pupils' understanding of the foreign language is good because all teachers use it extensively in lessons. Pupils' speaking is generally sound. Year 7 beginners in German speak confidently about school subjects, and in French about the colour of their eyes and hair. In other years, pupils participate sensibly and co-operatively in role-play with partners, some using prompts and some speaking from memory. In many instances, they ask questions as well as answer them. Pupils' pronunciation varies from good to just satisfactory; at times it is too anglicised. Few pupils intone questions correctly by raising the voice at the end. Pupils respond well to the questions put to them by teachers, but few ask for help in the foreign language. They do not make the effort to make French or German the language of the classroom, as do their teachers.
155. Pupils' writing is reasonably accurate: for instance, in Year 7 pupils use the numbers they have learnt to write dates and to give the date of their birthday correctly. In French, Year 8 pupils write short paragraphs about their house and its contents, and in Year 9 about themselves and their town. Higher-attaining pupils in Year 9 describe leisure activities using the perfect tense correctly. In German, Year 8 pupils write short pieces about school subjects and leisure activities, and in Year 9 about places. Higher attaining pupils use modal verbs quite confidently. One boy has produced a superb brochure on his town, its presentation matching the excellence of his German.
156. Pupils' overall level of attainment in French and German by the end of Year 11 is average. Higher-attaining pupils in Year 10 French speak competently; for example in one lesson they ordered restaurant meals and coped effectively with unexpected situations. In German, they spoke about school, using different tenses well. Lower-attaining Year 10 pupils lack confidence speaking German. During their practice oral examination in Year 11, higher and average-attaining pupils in both languages spoke confidently and competently using a good range of tenses and variety of vocabulary. A lower-attaining pupil was more hesitant and his pronunciation was not as good. Higher-attaining pupils in Year 11 write very accurately in each language, using a good range of tenses in French, and good word order in German. Average attainers are less consistently accurate and lower-attaining pupils have difficulty with the agreement of verb and subject in French, and with correct word order in German.
157. Most pupils make satisfactory progress in Years 7 to 9 and good progress in Years 10 and 11. Over time, pupils acquire a good knowledge of the relevant vocabulary for the different topics that they study. Teachers help pupils to develop these words with the different verbal constructions and opinions. In Years 10 and 11, pupils revise or acquire new topics and tenses. Although teachers provide many opportunities for pupils to develop their speaking and pronunciation in chorus, they do not ask individual pupils to repeat words or phrases. In German, Year 8 pupils learnt how to form the plural of different types of television programmes. Pupils learn to use numbers for dates and telling the time, which they combine with reflexive verbs to write about their daily routine in French. Pupils add, subtract and use numbers to give prices in euros, orally and in writing. Pupils with special educational needs are well integrated and are usually supported by different levels of work. Most make good progress, as do those with English as an additional language.
158. Overall, the quality of teaching is good. In one lesson teaching was unsatisfactory, because pupils were talkative and inattentive, with the result that they completed very little work, and the objectives of the lesson were not achieved. In most lessons though, pupils are well behaved and

attentive. Teachers speak the foreign language, in several instances almost exclusively, though they rarely insist that pupils use it when they require help. A very effective method of checking what has been learned is when teachers call the register towards the end of lessons, and every pupil has to use a sentence that he has learnt. Teaching methods are effective in many lessons: for example, the use of chorus work to consolidate vocabulary, noughts and

crosses, and a football, which teachers throw to selected pupils to encourage them to speak. The pupils either throw the ball back or pass the question and the ball to another pupil. Teachers' relationships with pupils are very good.

159. The head of department provides good direction for the languages and manages them very effectively. Teachers give pupils much support with language clubs and revision sessions after school. Data shows that those pupils who attend these achieve well. The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' moral, social and cultural development. French and German Days are held. Japanese is now offered as an extra-curricular activity. Although two Austrian assistants have been in school for a short time, pupils do not benefit from regular contact with native speakers. The department has too few textbooks in Year 7, readers in Years 7 to 9, up-to-date flash cards and ICT software. Improvement since the last inspection has been good.

MUSIC

Overall, the quality of provision in music is **poor**.

Strengths

- The music teacher enthuses pupils with her lively, inspired teaching and her warm, good humoured manner.
- Increasing numbers of pupils are taking instrumental lessons and choosing to study GCSE.

Areas for improvement

- The governors and senior management team have not provided suitable accommodation.
- Resources are generally inadequate, particularly in terms of ICT.
- Participation in extra-curricular activities and instrumental lessons is not as high as it should be.

160. The grim accommodation for music undermines the good teaching. The music teacher cannot be sure that she will have the use of the one, far from ideal, room in which she can teach the music curriculum; often, and sometimes at very short notice, she has to find another room. For several weeks in the summer, when GCSE examinations are on, and at other times of the year music lessons take place in the dining room. The instrumental teaching room is isolated from the main body of the school and not suitable for one-to-one lessons. A governor described the music department as the "poor relation" and boys complain, quite rightly, about this unacceptable situation. It sends the college community strong signals that music has a low status and lacks importance. It has a negative effect on learning and it is stifling development of a subject that could and should make a very significant contribution to the ethos and richness of college life. It is a fundamental problem, a key issue that must be addressed if the college is to retain its music teachers and improve provision. Since the last inspection there has been no improvement in this respect.
161. In Year 7, although their musical knowledge and skills vary widely, pupils are well disposed to the subject and try hard to make progress. Few pupils have taken GCSE music in recent years, but at last half have attained A*-C grades. Examination results are satisfactory in comparison with pupils' results in other subjects. Nine visiting teachers give about 60 boys instrumental lessons. Very few pupils currently attain high standards. Year 10 pupils' GCSE compositions are of a high standard and overall they attain above average standards. Some impressive performances were seen during the inspection: a pupil performed a complex and original composition on the tuned bodhran, an Irish drum, with real flair and competence, to the applause of other pupils. Another

pupil improvised fluently and melodically on a chord pattern at the piano, and a group of three pupils gave a sensitive and moving performance of an original song.

162. The department's poor provision, including the lack of an up-to-date computer, slows pupils' progress through Years 7 to 9. Standards are broadly average but for these pupils this represents underachievement. Pupils work effectively and with enthusiasm, especially when they use the xylophones, preparing simple pieces for performance in groups and as a class. They read musical notation accurately and understand how to vary dynamics, pitch, timbre and rhythm to create musical interest in their compositions. They listen carefully, with enjoyment, to a wide range of music which they describe using a range of musical terms and a thoughtful musical vocabulary. They rarely produce written work, partly because the amount of desktop space in the music room is limited.
163. In spite of the poor accommodation and resources teaching is consistently good or better. Lessons are well planned, objectives are clear and pupils of all ages speak highly of the teacher's commitment to them and their musical development. More pupils are choosing to take GCSE because of this. A Year 7 pupil commented: "The teacher is very good and lessons are a lot of fun", and a Year 10 pupil: "The teacher is really good at coming round to help me to make sure that I understand how to improve my compositions and my understanding of special musical terms".
164. Relationships between the teacher and pupils are excellent. The teacher is highly skilled at motivating boys and giving them a strong sense of their personal worth as young musicians. She has a pronounced ability to embrace with humour their quirky and sometimes boisterous tendencies and incorporate these into the lesson. When boys became over-excited and began to stamp on the floor she responded with delight, took charge as their "conductor", made crescendos and diminuendos and brought them humorously and effortlessly to silence. The teacher is well aware of those pupils who have special educational needs and makes good provision for them. Pupils are good learners. They are eager to embrace new musical ideas, they practice their pieces well; they are, in the music teacher's words, "adaptable, inventive, resilient, long-suffering and understanding". They deserve better.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Good teaching with well-planned lessons which include a range of activities so that all pupils learn well.
- Above average GCSE results.
- Strong leadership and commitment to improvement and success.
- A very good extra-curricular programme.

Areas for improvement

- The poor quality and provision of on-site sports facilities.
- Curricular links with partner primary schools.
- Resources: lack of easy access to ICT and too few textbooks for GCSE sports studies.

165. Standards in all years are above average and show good improvement from work in Year 7; a high proportion of pupils achieve well. All pupils passed sports studies GCSE in 2002 and an above average percentage attained A*-C grades. These pupils achieved better results in sports studies than in most of their other subjects. Overall, results have improved since the last inspection, but the percentage of pupils attaining the A*/A grades is low. High attaining and talented pupils achieve well in a range of sports, at borough, county and sometimes national levels. They perform particularly well in football, rugby, athletics and Gaelic football.

166. In Years 7 to 9 pupils understand basic fitness principles, judge performance accurately and use individual and team skills well. Teaching and learning are good and in a significant minority of lessons, very good. Teachers' knowledge and understanding of the subject help pupils to make considerable gains in their understanding of technique, tactics and fitness. Teachers plan carefully for progress and challenge. In a Year 7 gymnastics lesson, pupils of all different groups made good progress, because the teacher planned work that was appropriate for the wide levels of attainment, using modified equipment, simplified tasks and demonstrations, when needed. The standards of a small minority are below average. They often show satisfactory individual skills, in isolation, but perform less well under the pressure of a game. Their relatively weak hand-eye co-ordination and spatial awareness hold back their progress. Higher attaining pupils use well-refined skills and tactics to consistently outmanoeuvre opponents; their learning is accelerated by extension tasks in lessons and through extra-curricular sport.
167. In a few lessons learning was not as good, when teaching became more prescriptive and pupils were given less opportunity to explore their own ideas. Pupils in Years 7 to 11 show good standards of literacy and numerical skills. They are given opportunities to measure and record performance, plot heart rate graphs and to use scoring systems. Teachers emphasise key words and are adept in asking questions that make pupils think. These strategies improve pupils' technical vocabulary and speaking and listening skills. GCSE pupils develop their extended writing skills through assignments, such as 'drugs in sport'. The department lacks ICT resources, but strongly encourages GCSE pupils to use school and personal computers, including the Internet, for research, and to improve presentation. Most do so well. There are few opportunities for pupils in Years 7 to 9 to develop their ICT skills.
168. The small number of Year 11 pupils taking GCSE sports studies are on target to attain above average results. Pupils achieve well in Years 10 and 11, because of their positive attitudes to learning and good teaching. Teachers have high expectations and have good subject knowledge, planning and management skills. This was very evident in a Year 10 basketball lesson, where the teacher provided good opportunities for pupils to plan their own tactics, evaluate performance and officiate. A high percentage of pupils perform well in these tasks. Analysis of all Year 11 pupils' modular grades and scrutiny of GCSE files, show that most are achieving well. They understand the components of fitness, have good knowledge of the principles of training and apply their understanding of attacking and defensive tactics effectively in games.
169. Higher attaining and talented pupils' learning is accelerated by extension tasks, grouping and extra-curricular sport. Higher attaining pupils use their well-developed ICT skills to analyse and summarise data; they have a detailed understanding of the physiological effects of exercise on the body and perform to a high standard in the practical elements. The few lower attaining pupils lack tactical skills. They are less adept in applying theoretical concepts to practical situations; for example, knowledge of training principles to develop personal fitness programmes. Pupils co-operate well with each other and maintain good relationships with their teachers. Talented pupils, and those with special educational needs, make good progress in all years.
170. Leadership and management are good. The head of department has a very strong commitment to improvement and success and is ably supported by a dedicated team of specialists. All monitoring, evaluation and assessment systems are good. The latter can be further developed, through closer links with partner primary schools. The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. School sports facilities overall remain poor, but the department uses the good quality community provision very well. There is a lack of easy access to ICT and too few textbooks for GCSE sports studies. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. The standards of teaching and GCSE examination results have further improved. Opportunities for independent learning are now a feature of most lessons. Standards at the end of Year 9 are now above average.