

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **THE HOLY CROSS SCHOOL**

New Malden

LEA area: Kingston-Upon-Thames

Unique reference number: 102607

Headteacher: Mr Tom Gibson

Lead inspector: Mrs Sheila Browning

Dates of inspection: 1 – 5 March 2004

Inspection number: 259200

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category:	Voluntary Aided
Age range of students:	11-18
Gender of students:	Girls
Number on roll:	868
School address:	25 Sandal Road New Malden Surrey
Postcode:	KT3 5AR
Telephone number:	020 8395 4225
Fax number:	020 8395 4234
Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr V Mc Donnell
Date of previous inspection:	16 March 1998

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

The Holy Cross is an average sized Roman Catholic comprehensive school, with 868 girls aged 11 to 18 including a sixth form of 149 students. Approximately 18 per cent of students are from ethnic minorities: the major groups are 'Asian or Asian British', and 'White any other White background'. More than 11 per cent have a mother tongue other than English, which is higher than in most schools. Nineteen of these students receive special support in lessons. The school's roll is rising; it is popular and oversubscribed. The school is in a residential area of New Malden. Students come from a very wide variety of backgrounds. The number eligible for free school meals, at ten per cent, is broadly in line with the national average. The attainment of students entering the school covers the full range and is broadly average, although a significant proportion are of above average attainment. The school has a grammar stream of 30 places of which 20 are chosen by selective aptitude test at 11+. Eleven per cent of students have special educational needs (SEN); which is below the national average. The largest groups are those with moderate learning, social, emotional and behavioural needs, and 1.3 per cent of students have a statement of special need, which is below the national average. There is an average degree of student mobility. The Holy Cross is a designated specialist science college. The school won a Schools Achievement Award in 2002 and a Sports Mark Award in 2001.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
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9614	Carolyn Webb	Lay inspector	
32681	Maggie Rickman	Lay inspector	
14871	Beryl Buteux	Team inspector	English English as an additional language Media Studies (post 16)
33160	Natalia Power	Team inspector	English (post 16)
6138	Keith Page	Team inspector	Mathematics Mathematics (post 16)
20666	Ian Newton	Team inspector	Science
31034	Nigel Zanker	Team inspector	Citizenship Design and technology
20533	David Rogers	Team inspector	Art and design
4223	Garth Collard	Team inspector	Geography History
33727	Nick Vinall	Team inspector	Information and communication technology Science support
10060	David Gutman	Team inspector	Information and communication technology support
17932	John Bald	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
8622	Heather Housden	Team inspector	Physical education Physical education (post 16)
32166	Nasim Butt	Team inspector	Science support Biology (post 16)
8139	Barbara Johnstone	Team inspector	Music
1249	Joseph Edge	Team inspector	Special educational needs Science support
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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

**The school provides a good education for its students.** This is a good and rapidly improving school. Standards are well above national averages. The achievement of students is good given their attainment when they enter the school. The quality of teaching and learning is good. The attitudes of students are very positive and their behaviour and relationships are very good. They have a strong sense of justice and morality. The school is very well led. Management is satisfactory. The governing body provides good support. The school gives good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Aspects of the accommodation are unsatisfactory and they constrain teaching and learning.
- Standards are good and are improving. Students achieve well, as a result of the good teaching and learning.
- The use of assessment is not yet consistently embedded throughout the school and lesson planning does not consistently focus on the needs of higher-attaining students and those with special educational needs.
- The school is very well led and leadership has a clear focus on raising standards.
- Resources for information and communication technology (ICT) have improved but there remains scope for further development.
- The allocation of time for some foundation subjects varies through Years 7 to 9 and is insufficient overall. The revised curriculum for Years 10 to 11 and the sixth form is good and innovative.
- Students are well supported and valued and, as a result of the school's very good inclusive nature and high expectations, behaviour and relationships are very good.

The school has made good progress since it was last inspected in 1998. All of the key issues identified in the previous report have been addressed. The school makes best use of the unsatisfactory accommodation and has successfully secured funding to improve this in the near future. The curriculum and grouping arrangements at Key Stages 3 and 4 have improved. Standards in ICT, access to computers and the training of staff are improved. The management and efficiency of the school are significantly more rigorous. Overall, standards have fluctuated since the last inspection but they are now more stable and show improvement. Students' attitudes, behaviour and relationships remain very good and attendance in the main school has improved. The headteacher is providing very good leadership and he has been instrumental in moving the school forward. The school has a clear focus on raising attainment and improving provision.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Performance compared with:		all schools			similar schools
		2001	2002	2003	2003
Year 11	GCSE/GNVQ examinations	A	B	A	A*
Year 13	A/AS level and VCE examinations	E*	C	D	

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

**Students' achievement is good in the main school and in the sixth form.** Examination results continue to improve overall. The trend of improvement in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 is broadly in line with the national trend but the trend for improvement in GCSE examination results is above the national trend. Current standards in English, mathematics, ICT, design and technology, geography, history and physical education are above average. GCSE examination results are good in English literature and language, French, religious education and drama. The achievement of students with English as an additional language is good. The achievement of students with special educational needs and of higher-attaining students is satisfactory.

**Provision for students' personal development and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good.** Students' attitudes to their education and their behaviour are very good. Their attendance is above the national average. Relationships throughout the school community are very good. Students are proud to belong to the school.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED**

**The quality of the education provided by the school is good. Teaching and learning are good throughout the school.** This is a major factor, alongside the hard work and commitment of the students, in the good progress being made. Teachers are knowledgeable and usually plan their lessons effectively. They use well tried methods and both encourage and engage their students' interest successfully. Lessons are well focused on acquiring and developing knowledge and skills. Although some good practices are seen in the use of assessment, these are not yet embedded throughout the school consistently. Support for higher-attaining students and those with special educational needs, while well thought out in some subjects, is less effective in others. Students are well motivated and actively participate in lessons. They are eager to take responsibility for their learning when given the opportunity.

The curriculum is good overall. Nevertheless, the allocation of time for some foundation subjects varies through Years 7 to 9 and is insufficient in design and technology, modern foreign languages and physical education. The reviewed curriculum for Years 10 to 11 and the sixth form is innovative and is expanding. Unsatisfactory accommodation restricts learning opportunities, especially in some practical subjects like science, music, physical education, drama and media studies. Care, guidance and support are good overall. There are good links with parents and the wider community.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

**Leadership and management are good overall:** leadership is good and the effectiveness of management is satisfactory. The headteacher provides very strong leadership, and he has managed change most effectively. As a result, the school has a very clear focus on raising achievement and improving provision. Staff morale is high. The governance of the school is good. Designation as a Science College is having a significant and positive impact on the development of the school.

## **PARENTS' AND STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL**

Parents and students are satisfied with most aspects of the school's work and view it very positively. Of those returning the parental questionnaire, a minority expressed concern about: not being kept well informed about their child's progress, staff not explaining how they might help their child and about the range of activities on offer. The majority of students returning their questionnaire were very positive about the school. Nevertheless, significant proportions of younger students, through their questionnaires, raised concerns about bullying and behaviour. Inspectors found no evidence of course for these concerns and endorse the positive comments. The school is addressing the concerns about information on progress and how parents can support their child. A wide range of activities is offered. When unacceptable behaviour occurs, it is dealt with immediately and effectively.

## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

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

- Improve the unsatisfactory accommodation.
- Use the good assessment practices consistently throughout the school.
- Ensure that lesson planning focuses consistently on the needs of higher attaining students and those with special educational needs.
- Review the time allocation for the foundation subjects in Years 7 to 9.

- Build on the improvements seen to extend resources for ICT across the school.

Some less crucial improvements needed are:

- Improve the attendance of a few students in the sixth form whose attendance is unsatisfactory.

## SIXTH FORM

The sixth form is smaller than other sixth forms with 149 students, many more in Year 12 than Year 13. Courses offered include GNVQ AVCE and a wide range of AS and A-level subjects.

## OVERALL EVALUATION

**The sixth form provides a good education.** Standards are currently good and are improving. Students' achievement is good. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good. The curriculum and range of courses on offer are more relevant to the students' needs. The sixth form is well led and liaison with Richard Challoner School, the partner in the sixth form federation, is good. The number of students returning to the sixth form from Year 11 has increased. The sixth form is cost effective.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Standards are good and require a continued emphasis to ensure they continue to improve.
- Aspects of the accommodation are unsatisfactory.
- The quality of teaching and learning is good.
- The expanded curriculum is innovative and meets the needs of students well.
- The attendance of a few students is unsatisfactory.
- Leadership is strong and management is well structured.

## QUALITY AND STANDARDS IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES OF THE CURRICULUM

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

Curriculum area	Evaluation
English, languages and communication	<b>Provision for English is good.</b> The A-level examination results in 2003 at grades A* to E were above average in English literature, and in line with the national average in English language. Students' achievement overall is satisfactory. Teaching is good and students have a strong commitment to their learning. Leadership is good and there is a strong and committed team.
Mathematics	<b>Provision for mathematics is good.</b> AS and A level students are achieving well and are increasing in number. Teaching and learning are good. The use of ICT is underdeveloped, particularly in statistics. Assessment is not sufficiently focused to help students improve and reach their target grades. Leadership and management are good.
Science	<b>Provision for biology is good.</b> Standards are average, the quality of teaching is good. The quality of leadership is good and provides a clear vision for the subject.
Visual and performing arts and media Media Studies	<b>Provision for media studies is very good.</b> The wide range of courses provided enables students at all levels of ability to achieve well. Teaching is very good. Lack of space and resources are constraints to teaching and learning.



Physical education	<p><b>Provision for physical education is satisfactory.</b> Despite good teaching, standards are depressed because of the accommodation constraints. Standards at both AS and A-level are in line with national averages. The teaching of AS and A-level is shared between Holy Cross and Richard Challoner Schools. Most students aspire to allied careers as a result of very good teaching by Holy Cross teachers. There is too little curriculum time for sport.</p>
<p><i>The curriculum areas are broadly common across all post-16 education and training. They do not necessarily correspond with subjects and courses taught by the school. Inspectors make judgements in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. Excellent and very good are equivalent to the judgement 'outstanding' in further education and sixth form college reports; poor and very poor are equivalent to 'very weak'.</i></p>	

## **ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT**

The school provides very good pastoral care, and students receive very good advice, guidance and support. Students benefit from two tutors, one at Holy Cross and another at Richard Challoner, facilities they find extremely helpful when they need immediate assistance or advice. Good use is made of careers interviews and the procedures to ensure that all receive guidance are good. Individual subject teachers at Holy Cross provide informative and regular feedback about students' progress.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM**

**Leadership is good and management is satisfactory.** Leadership is very capable with wide ranging expertise that is having a positive impact on developments in the sixth form. The development of a more flexible curriculum, raised expectations and overall improvements in provision are raising attainment. There has been a substantial increase in the number of Year 11 students returning to Year 12. The federation arrangements with Richard Challoner generally work well. However, students receive inconsistent feedback from the two schools. Designation as a Science College is having a significant impact on school development.

## **STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM**

Students are very supportive of the sixth form. They are particularly happy with the range of courses and extensive enrichment programme offered. They value the support they receive, though a few were critical of guidance they received with regard to future employment. The school's ethos of working for others is exemplified by the sixth form's excellent involvement in the Millennium Volunteer project. A number of students also train as mentors to support younger students. This shows a very good level of community service.

## PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS

#### Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Current standards are good overall. The achievement of the great majority of students is good in all key stages and across all areas of the curriculum. The achievement of students with special educational needs and gifted and talented students is satisfactory. For those students for whom English is an additional language, achievement is good.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Current standards in Years 7 to 11 are good and students achieve well overall.
- Standards in national tests and examinations in 2003 in Years 9 and 11 were well above average.
- In 2003, the average points score for students entered for GCE A/AS and VCE levels was below the national average, although the percentage of students gaining A-E grades increased from the previous year.
- Students' fluent use of language and confident speaking skills are reflected in their achievements in examinations.
- Students for whom English is an additional language achieve well.
- Standards are very high for those students taking separate sciences at GCSE.
- Students' achievements in literacy are not consistent in all subjects across the school.

#### Commentary

1. The attainment of students entering the school covers the full range and is broadly average with a significant proportion of students with above average attainment. Given this, achievement in national tests at the end of Year 9 was satisfactory and students reached the standards expected of them overall. Standards were well above the national average overall but standards in mathematics and science were not high enough when considering students' previous achievement. Results in 2003 show an overall improvement on those in 2002, especially in English. The trend of improvement was in line with the national trend. This reflects the school's focus on raising standards and the developing targeting of students in the school improvement plan.

#### **Standards in national tests at the end of Year 9 – average point scores in 2003**

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	36 (34)	33 (33)
Mathematics	37 (35)	35 (35)
Science	35 (34)	34 (33)

There were 145 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

2. In the 2003 GCSE examinations, overall standards were well above the national average and when students' prior attainment is considered the progress they made from Year 9 was very high. In 2003, there was a marked improvement in GCSE results, especially in the percentage of students gaining five or more grades A\* to C, well above the national average. Realistic targets set for 2003 were significantly exceeded. Results have improved above the nationally rising trend over the last five years. The proportion of students leaving school without a qualification, now two per cent, has reduced since the last inspection. Overall performance is better than it was in 1998.

### Standards in GCSE/GNVQ examinations at the end of Year 11 in 2003

	School results	National results
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	74 (53)	52 (50)
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	93 (86)	91 (91)
Percentage of students gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	98 (94)	96 (96)
Average point score per student (best eight subjects)	42 (36.7)	36.7 (34.8)

*There were 149 students in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

- Evidence from lessons and from the sampling of students' work in Years 7 to 9 indicates that current standards of students and their achievement are good in English, mathematics, ICT, geography, history, design and technology, art and design and physical education. They are also good in Year 10 in ICT, and in Years 10 and 11 in English, modern foreign languages, mathematics, science, history, resistant materials and textiles. This reflects the whole school focus on raising standards and achievement: it also reflects the different characteristics of the cohorts. The quality and presentation of written work are good. Nevertheless, some variation is noted between departments. Students take great pride in their work. Their spelling is generally accurate; most use technical terms with good understanding. The quality of speaking, listening and reading again varies somewhat between subjects. The school has recent information indicating that certain groups of girls are underachieving (namely mixed white/black Caribbean and low socio-economic white students in Years 7 to 11, though these are small in number). Inspectors found no significant evidence to confirm these findings.
- The achievement of students for whom English is an additional language is good. They are withdrawn from lessons on a rota basis for intensive language study to ensure that they can keep up with their studies in all subjects. Consequently, students achieve well, because they are included in all areas of learning. A significant proportion come to England especially to learn English and they arrive with only a few words. Because of the well-structured learning support they leave after two years as competent speakers. Students are involved and participate fully in learning and confidently acquire knowledge and skills.
- The achievement of students with special educational needs is satisfactory overall. The achievement of statemented students and those supported at school action plus level is good because provision is good. However, some individual educational plan (IEP) targets are too general and subject teachers are not always fully aware of each student's specific needs. Although the school is increasing its number of departmental assistants for special needs, there are still some acknowledged gaps in provision where support would be beneficial. Currently, good practices are seen in mathematics, art and design, geography, history, music and physical education. The main barrier to achievement is the lack of consistency in lesson plans to support students with learning needs across all subject areas.
- The achievement of gifted and talented and higher-attaining students is satisfactory overall. As in the case for those with special educational needs, the main barrier to their higher achievement is the lack of consistency in lesson plans to support students across all subjects. Students' needs are well met in Years 10 and 11 in modern foreign languages, separate sciences and music throughout the school. However, their needs are not addressed sufficiently in mathematics and art and design and across other subjects there are inconsistencies in the level of challenge set.
- Overall, the school is very inclusive. Value-added indicators show that in Years 7 to 11 almost all students achieve well compared with their prior attainment and ability, and compared with students at similar schools.

8. Students undertaking vocational courses achieve appropriately in ICT. In ICT in Year 10, GCSE and GNVQ standards are above average, and in Year 11 they are average. Students taking the GNVQ art and design course are achieving well.

### Sixth form

9. In 2003, results at A-level were below the national average. The percentage of students gaining A-E grades increased and the percentage of students gaining A-B grades declined when compared with the 2002 results. The average point score per student entered also declined. Historically, those who achieved well in Year 11 opted to study at alternative providers of sixth form education. In the past, some students enrolled on courses, which were too demanding for them. The school is well aware of the need to improve attainment in the sixth form. Because of this, the school is developing a more appropriate curriculum using vocational pathways to provide for all abilities and learning styles.
10. Attainment on entry to the sixth form is wide ranging, from above average to below average. Standards seen in lessons and students' work in Years 12 and 13 indicate that standards are improving and current students are achieving well. The difference in judgements made about standards now and when compared with previous examination results can be explained by: the different characteristics of the cohorts, the good quality of work seen now, the development of a more appropriate curriculum and the raised expectations of both teachers and students. The school is successfully extending its vocational provision to ensure clear progression from GNVQ to AVCE. As a result, retention rates have significantly improved in Year 12 this year. In ICT in Years 11 to 13, standards of work in GNVQ ICT and advanced vocational courses are average. In media studies, the wide range of courses offered including GNVQ, AVCE and AS and A levels provides students with exceptional opportunities and as a result, they are integrating practical performance with intellectual effort and skill development well. Work was also sampled in physics, business education and psychology; evidence indicates that students achieve at least well in these subjects. Work sampled in chemistry indicates that students achieve satisfactorily.

#### **Standards in GCE A/AS level and VCE examinations at the end of Year 13 in 2003**

	School results	National results
Percentage of entries gaining A-E grades	87 (84)	89 (93)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	20 (24)	33 (35)
Average point score per student	218.8 (222.5)	258.2 (263.3)

*There were 53 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

11. The achievement of students for whom English is an additional language is good. Inspectors had insufficient evidence to make secure judgements about the achievement of students with special educational needs and of the gifted and talented. By the end of the sixth form, current standards are good, demonstrating good achievement.

### Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Students' attitudes to their education and their behaviour are very good. Their attendance is above the national average. Relationships throughout the school community and sixth form are very good. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students are enthusiastic and are proud of their school.
- The school's high expectations promote good behaviour and personal development.
- The opportunities to demonstrate responsibility and maturity are very good.
- The sixth form is increasingly popular.

## Commentary

12. Students are proud to attend this popular school and arrive promptly in the morning. Punctuality and attendance are good. The few late arrivals are carefully monitored by the attendance officer and the education welfare officer, who visits frequently. Holidays are rarely taken in term time.
13. Because of teachers' high expectations and the students' own desire to do well, a lively yet purposeful atmosphere is evident. Students are keen to learn and interested in their work. Certificates are valued and eagerly sought: achievements are celebrated with their peers, and many recorded in the magazine. The effective behaviour policy results in good behaviour in and outside the school building, although a number of younger students, through their questionnaires, raised concerns about bullying. Inspectors found no evidence of this during the inspection. After conversations with many students and general observation, inspectors concluded that when unacceptable behaviour occurs it is dealt with immediately and effectively. The senior prefect team, head girl and her deputies, as well as adults, are always ready to help. Very effective sanctions include the ten-minute detentions given for minor transgressions. Twenty-four hours' notice is given for longer periods. Internal exclusion is a serious matter and rarely invoked. There have been 22 exclusions for varying terms during the past twelve months but none has been permanent. This is an improvement since the last inspection.

### ***Ethnic background of students***

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British
White – Irish
White – any other White background
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean
Mixed – White and Black African
Mixed – White and Asian
Mixed – any other mixed background
Asian or Asian British – Indian
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background
Black or Black British – Caribbean
Black or Black British – African
Black or Black British – any other Black background
Chinese
Any Other ethnic group
Parent / student preferred not to say
Information not obtained
Total

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

No of students on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
536	18	0
13	1	0
45	2	0
16	1	0
7	0	0
19	0	0
32	1	0
15	0	0
17	0	0
0	0	0
47	0	0
13	1	0
37	0	0
4	4	0
6	0	0
43	0	0
6	4	0
0	0	0
856	32	0

**Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (2003)**

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	6.6	School data	0.2
National data	7.2	National data	1.1

*The table gives the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.*

14. Students with special education or other needs are supported appropriately overall. The few, who speak English as an additional language, are well supported by their peers and the school's arrangements to assist them. All students are well integrated and included in all activities.
15. Students' spiritual development is very good and well promoted through assemblies and the curriculum: students respond well to the school's spiritual aims and spiritual awareness is evident in some lessons, particularly in religious education, art and design, dance and music. As a result of the school's strong Christian, caring ethos and their own desire to be of use, students are genuinely concerned about the plight of others less fortunate than themselves and determined to help wherever they can. They endeavour to 'live' the mission statement. Year groups, who strive to think of new ways in which they can raise money, choose different charities. 'Every penny counts' Year 9 were told during an assembly when two Year 10 students gave examples of how they had raised over £300 for their chosen charity. Students are well aware of different faiths and traditions amongst their own community.
16. Students' personal, moral and social development is very good. They have very strong moral values and a strong sense of justice. They are polite and courteous and keen to assist others. All are encouraged to take on areas of responsibility and they carry them out diligently. Students feel that the school listens to their views; surveys and representations from the student council are important parts of this effective consultation. The senior prefect team, who have written job descriptions, are keen to help. The social prefects organise the 'mother and daughter' dinner and leavers' ball, which have pride of place in the school's very full calendar of activities.
17. Students' cultural development is very good and they are well prepared to take their place in Britain's multi-cultural society. They develop a good understanding of both their own and different cultures through citizenship and other lessons and workshops. Proud of their school and its cultural diversity, they have designed a badge celebrating this, which all wear. Foreign exchanges and other visits, as well as visiting speakers, enhance their knowledge and experience.

**Sixth form**

18. Students' attitudes and behaviour are good in the sixth form. Attendance and punctuality are satisfactory overall. Students demonstrate considerable enthusiasm for their courses and mature attitudes to their studies. They act as good role models for younger students. They are interested in and are actively involved in all aspects of school life. A number of students have also trained as mentors to support younger students. Many more students now attend the sixth form, and all are well prepared for the world outside school.
19. The senior prefect team work to detailed job descriptions. Their responsibilities include mentoring of younger students, social activities and homework club. Training has been arranged for them to aspire to becoming 'perfect prefects'. The head girl and her deputies, appointed after stringent interviews, meet weekly with members of the senior management team to discuss the smooth running of the school. Students' spiritual, moral, social, and cultural education is good. Social and cultural education are provided effectively through an extensive personal, social and health education programme and further developed for many by the English and media studies curricula. Due to the enthusiastic yet mature response to the

school's high expectations and the many opportunities available to them, students are well prepared for the world outside Holy Cross.

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education is good overall. Teaching and learning are good. There are a few shortcomings in the curriculum and the accommodation is unsatisfactory.

### Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are good. Students learn well because they are interested in the work and are well motivated. Assessment is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9; it is better in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form. Lesson plans do not focus consistently on the individual needs of learners.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching and learning are raising the standards of all students.
- Teachers are well qualified and are knowledgeable about their subjects.
- Assessment and target setting is not always sufficiently focused and consistent.
- Lesson plans do not focus consistently on the needs of higher-attaining students and those with special educational needs across all subjects.
- Most students enjoy their lessons, and work hard.
- Positive relationships have created a productive working environment.

### Commentary

#### *Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 149 lessons*

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
6 (4%)	33 (22%)	68 (46%)	39 (26%)	3 (2%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

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

20. Teaching and learning are good overall. In just over a quarter of the lessons seen, teaching was very good or excellent, in over seven out of ten good or even better, and in less than one in forty unsatisfactory. This is an improvement since the last inspection. Overall, there is little difference between the quality of teaching in Years 7 to 11, but there are more instances of very good teaching in the sixth form.
21. A key focus of school improvement is to improve the quality of teaching. As a result, lessons are well prepared with a variety of different teaching styles. Good practices are shared in teaching forums. The Key Stage 3 strategy is used effectively, with quick mental starter activities, probing questions, and clear learning objectives shared and then developed into a main activity. Plenarys are used well to consolidate and summarise what students have learned. The basic skills of literacy and numeracy are reinforced in some subjects more successfully than others. This is one of the inconsistencies found in teaching. ICT skills are developing across most subjects appropriately but in some cases unsatisfactory accommodation is a barrier to accessing ICT.
22. Teachers are well qualified and are knowledgeable about their subjects. Some outstanding teaching was seen in science, design and technology, history and physical education. In these lessons, teachers were enthusiastic in their readiness to share information, and used resources creatively in their teaching to stimulate and interest students. Lesson planning was thorough and clear, and met the needs of students well. Lessons were brisk, students were challenged and their progress monitored. Teachers use a variety of teaching methods successfully, and usually provide good opportunities to generate discussions and views and

draw on students' experiences well. They usually have good expectations and challenge students well. The interaction and relationship between teachers and students are very good and this is a strong contributory factor to the standards achieved.

23. Features of the relatively few unsatisfactory lessons were vague instructions, weak planning, the unsatisfactory use and provision of resources and on occasion inexperience in managing different activities. Work was not well matched to students' abilities and the level of challenge was inappropriate.
24. Learning support assistants are very professional and work effectively with those who have special educational needs. Practice is inconsistent in subject areas, and especially so when extra support is not available. In the best provision, subject teachers are adept at providing different methods and materials to help students with special educational needs to learn. On occasion, work is not matched to individual needs and students are then restricted in their ability to achieve. This is also true for gifted and talented and higher-attaining students who are not always consistently challenged. The monitoring of their progress, because recent, is varied and inconsistent and is dependent on individual subject management. The newly appointed co-ordinator has arranged a good programme of enrichment activities and additional lessons. For students with English as an additional language, innovative schemes for supporting learning across the curriculum have been developed. The co-ordinator manages the teaching support skilfully and arranges tiered English teaching for individuals or for small groups of learners, depending on the stage of language acquisition that each student has reached. Students respond well to this focused teaching and make good progress as a result. Nevertheless, there are not enough teaching assistants to cope with the increasing demand for support.
25. In the main, individual needs are usually well catered for. Students are expected to work hard and they do. The level of challenge is realistic and students are productive. Particularly good opportunities are given to students to develop and articulate their ideas and opinions. When given the opportunity to undertake investigative work and research, they also respond very well. On occasion, students are over-directed and are not given enough opportunities to learn for themselves. Homework and assignments are suitably challenging and effectively extend work undertaken in lessons.

### **Sixth form**

26. Teaching and learning are good overall. No unsatisfactory lessons were seen. In over a third of the lessons seen, teaching and learning were very good or excellent. Teaching is usually rigorous, well informed, and systematic so that new knowledge and skills are acquired and consolidated. On occasion, teaching is over-directed, with too much teacher talk, limiting the development of students' independent and investigational skills. Students are committed and want to do well. They are actively involved and enjoy participating and taking charge of the direction of their own learning. They are generally given good scope to research and to prepare presentations, and they use ICT effectively to present their findings. In media studies, the quality of their own learning is high because it is based on co-operative working, exchanging ideas and mutual respect. In physical education, teachers make excellent use of a wide range of resources, such as PowerPoint, to maintain interest, maximise good use of time and promote independent learning. With the exception of mathematics, students use computers well to word process and communicate their work. The Internet is widely used for research.

### **Assessment**

27. Teachers usually mark work effectively and students are aware of the overall quality of what they have done. Guidance as to how to improve and targets to work towards is also given, but this practice is inconsistent. Assessment is at least satisfactory and is continuing to develop. Information from reviewing students' work and analysing test results is increasingly informing teaching and learning. However, it is better in Years 10 and 11 and the sixth form than in Years 7 to 9. The school has focused on Years 10 to 11 by streamlining central records of



marks and performance data, but as yet not all subject areas are using this information. The system allows teachers to track and assess the progress of individual students more readily. Students and parents are involved in target setting. In the sixth form, marking is thorough and offers students clear guidelines on what they need to do to improve the quality of their work. Students said the one-to-one assessment practices were valuable and assessment information and regular interviews were used very well to inform them about their progress and future targets. These practices are having a real impact on raising standards and achievement. In mathematics, marking and day-to-day records are not sufficiently focused on content, and students do not always know what they need to do to improve and reach their targets.

## **The curriculum**

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The accommodation to meet the needs of the curriculum for Years 7 to 11 is unsatisfactory.
- Provision for students with English as an additional language is good.
- The allocation of time for some foundation subjects varies through Years 7 to 9 and is insufficient in design and technology, modern foreign languages and physical education.
- Curriculum provision for students wishing to study two languages is inadequate and timetabling in Year 10 is not effective.
- The options and related vocational courses are innovative in Years 10 to 13.
- Provision in ICT is not fully developed.

### **Commentary**

28. The curriculum for Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory. It is broad and covers all the requirements of the National Curriculum. Students feel well supported in the transfer from primary school. In Year 7, all students are introduced to Spanish and it becomes optional in Years 8 and 9. The allocation of time for some foundation subjects varies through Years 7 to 9 and it is insufficient in design and technology, modern foreign languages and physical education. This has a negative effect on progression and the depth of coverage. Overall, the curriculum provides a satisfactory platform for progression to Year 10.
29. The reviewed curriculum for Years 10 to 11 is good overall and it meets statutory requirements. However, the curriculum in Year 11 is very academic and there are limited vocational courses designed to meet the needs of all students. In contrast, in Year 10, very good planning by the senior management team and the newly appointed head of vocational education now provides good access and opportunities for all students. A number of alternative curriculum initiatives have been introduced to provide a more relevant learning experience for those students who found that the old curriculum did not match their needs. Courses include an element of work-related learning at the local college (such as catering, hairdressing, motor vehicles and ICT) and also a wide choice of vocational opportunities. The new curriculum is forward looking and provides clear pathways for the subsequent stages of education, employment and further study beyond school. Vocational courses are planned in science, drama, design and technology, health and social care, media studies and music, linked to the school's specialist science designation.
30. The curriculum does not make adequate provision for students wishing to study two languages, and timetabling in modern foreign languages hampers further progress in Year 10. The curriculum generally provides equality of access and opportunities for effective learning for students with special educational needs and those with minority ethnic backgrounds, including those who have English as an additional language. Careers education and guidance are good. Criticisms of the Years 10 and 11 curriculum raised at the last inspection have now been largely resolved.

31. Overall, provision for students who speak English as an additional language is good, with some very good features. There are 36 students supported by the local education authority grant. Provision for students with special educational needs is satisfactory, and it is good for those statemented and those on school action plus. Provision for gifted and talented students is currently satisfactory.

### **Sixth form**

32. The curriculum provision is good and developing. Although the majority of the options are academic, there has been a considerable improvement in the range of vocational courses and experiences within them since the last inspection. Present and potential students confirm that this has improved the curriculum's relevance to their needs and has resulted in increased numbers despite strong competition from neighbouring schools and colleges. The preparation provided by the careers and Connexions tutors for later stages of education and employment is good. However, some students studying mainly academic subjects would appreciate more guidance on employment after A level.
33. Access to the sixth form is well managed and the process adds value to Year 12 students' personal and social education by fully involving them in the recruitment of Year 11 students. The main provision results from a federation with the local Roman Catholic boys school. All students have work experience, study religious education and personal, social and health education and can obtain a good range of qualifications including GCSE, GCE AS and A level, AVCE and GNVQ.
34. In addition to compulsory religious, personal, and social education, all students through their large commitment to voluntary work in the community, have major opportunities to reflect on their own and other people's lives. A very good range of extra-curricular activities that include organising social events and mentoring are offered.

### **Enrichment**

35. The provision for curriculum enrichment is good and there is a good take-up rate by students. Opportunities are available for students to take part in a range of sporting activities. These include athletics, gymnastics, netball and trampoline. There is an art club and visits have been made to art galleries and museums. The history department provides a film club. Musical activities include a choir, orchestra and other small rehearsal groups. Students have attended a gamelan workshop at the Royal Festival Hall. Year 10 students visited the Wandsworth City Learning Centre to record a group composition. There is a school ski trip and Year 8 students have taken part in a residential activity based programme at Hindleap Warren. There are successful school exchanges to France and Germany. Opportunities are also provided for students to take part in competitions, debates and public speaking events.

### **Staffing**

36. The quality and quantity of staffing are good. Shared staffing of teaching groups with Richard Challoner School extends learning opportunities for students. All subjects of the curriculum are suitably staffed and teachers have good qualifications and experience. The school takes positive measures to recruit and retain staff in shortage areas such as science, mathematics and design and technology and has used some of its specialist status money to improve staffing in science. The students are well served by a non-teaching librarian who is a qualified teacher of EAL. Because of the increasing demand, too few students with special educational needs and English as an additional language receive support, because the number of learning support assistants is low.

## **Accommodation**

37. The accommodation is unsatisfactory to meet the needs of the curriculum. It provides less adequate support for the delivery of the curriculum than at the time of the last inspection, when it was considered satisfactory. It is acceptable in English, mathematics, art and design, modern foreign languages, geography and history, but unsatisfactory in science, where some lessons are taught in classrooms, rather than in laboratories. It is unsatisfactory in ICT, where the rooms are too small, and unsatisfactory in drama, and media studies. The accommodation in music is poor, with inadequate practice rooms and a main teaching room, which is not soundproofed and is too small to provide effective instrumental teaching. The accommodation in physical education is poor and has an adverse impact on learning. The on-site games facilities are inadequate, the field is small and the dining room doubles as a gym space. The temporary classrooms are in a very poor state of repair and do not provide accommodation conducive to effective teaching and learning. There are good displays in many classrooms, an aspect noted in the previous inspection. The small library and chapel provide attractive accommodation. The canteen and dining facilities are poor and cramped.
38. Aspects of the accommodation in the sixth form are unsatisfactory. Provision of accommodation in physical education is poor and the lack of purpose-built facilities has an adverse impact on the quality of learning. Classrooms and laboratories are cramped in some subjects, such as ICT and media studies, and only just support the delivery of the curriculum. The attractive sixth-form block, which has common rooms, study rooms and the use of a kitchen, provides a very good resource for students.

## **Resources**

39. There has been an improvement in the provision for learning resources since the last inspection. Resources are now satisfactory, overall. However, they are unsatisfactory in ICT, as the provision is not yet fully developed and the school is in the process of increasing the provision. The Kells library is a satisfactory learning resource, though small it is bright and well maintained. There is no comfortable space for students to sit and read books and magazines. A full-time librarian oversees the provision well. New books have been purchased and the library now contains the careers section. To support students with English as an additional language, teachers use local education authority material and examination board programmes to boost learning, which equips students with the language knowledge and skills necessary for good achievements in public examinations.
40. Resources in the sixth form overall are satisfactory. In physical education and ICT the provision is unsatisfactory and does not ensure students have the appropriate access to the resources they require for effective study.

## **Care, guidance and support**

The school has good procedures to promote the health and safety of students and responds instantly to any concern raised. All staff are aware of child protection issues and very good procedures are followed when the need arises. Students receive good advice and guidance about their choices for the future.

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pastoral care is very good.
- Relationships are very good throughout the school.
- Procedures for support and inclusion are very good
- Students' personal development is not formally recorded or monitored.

## **Commentary**

41. The health and safety of the whole school community are high priorities for Holy Cross and procedures are good. A continental breakfast is enjoyed by many, some of whom have travelled long distances, and the school nurse runs a 'drop in' surgery once a week. Risk assessments are comprehensive, security is reviewed regularly, and trained personnel are always on site to administer first aid. An improvement since the last inspection, at least two members of staff are now trained in child protection and share their training with teaching staff. The small number of health and safety matters noted during the inspection were dealt with immediately.
42. Students in the main school receive very good advice, guidance and support. All have individual targets to work towards, which are regularly reviewed. Comments on their written work and those made in class encourage them to aim higher and help them to know where and how to improve. Homework diaries are monitored daily by tutors and are used well as a dialogue with parents. Good liaison and communication with the special educational needs co-ordinators at 'feeder' primary schools means that students who are already identified with weaknesses in literacy or numeracy skills start their remedial programmes during their second week at Holy Cross. The provision for students with English as an additional language reflects the school ethos of caring for all students whatever their race, beliefs or culture. The harmonious atmosphere is a palpable presence in the life of the school.
43. Teachers know students well but personal development, though very well promoted, is not formally recorded nor monitored. Very good relationships ensure all have someone to turn to if they are worried or need advice and this includes their peers. For instance, a number of the senior prefect team are delighted to mentor Year 7 students, who value this support. Students know that tutors will help with both academic and personal difficulties, as will the directors of year groups. They can and do approach the deputy headteacher if confidentiality is important. Pastoral care is very effective and it is one of the school's many strengths.
44. Procedures to ensure all receive good guidance for their futures are satisfactory, although a few have been disappointed that most of the advice is about future education rather than immediate employment. Year 10 students enjoy their work experience and most placements are found through the school. In Year 11, the school expects all students to complete 100 or 200 hours of voluntary work, most of which are carried out at local nurseries, primary schools and homes for the elderly. All speak to the careers adviser, and some see the Connexions officer who helps them to access information from the good range of materials in the library. Mock interviews, with members of the local Rotary Club amongst others, give students confidence as well as 'helpful hints'.

## **Sixth form**

45. The very good pastoral care extends to the sixth form, and students receive very good advice, guidance and support. They, too, have access to personal careers interviews, and the procedures to ensure that all receive good guidance are good. A few, as in the main school, regret that much of this concerns future education rather than immediate employment. Students benefit from two tutors, one at Holy Cross and another at Richard Challoner, facilities they said were extremely helpful particularly when they needed immediate assistance or advice. Choices and possibilities are discussed, and they said that they were well prepared for decisions they make for their future.

## **Partnership with parents, other schools and the community**

The school has good links with parents, good community links and good links with other schools, all of which have a positive impact on student's learning.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents are very supportive of the school.
- Specialist School status is starting to enhance good links with other schools.
- The links with St Josephs Church and its parish are strong.
- The federation sixth form with Richard Challoner is successful.
- Reports are inconsistent in the information given and there is a lack of curriculum information provided for parents.
- Effective community links with the immediate neighbourhood and the Korean parent and business population are not established.

## Commentary

46. Parents hold the school in high regard and actively support it. They are kept well informed by frequent newsletters and an annual magazine. They receive annual reports on their daughters' progress and participate in a homework diary system. Prior to entry, they receive a prospectus and all receive the Governors Annual Report, both of which comply with government requirements. Parents belong to the active Parent and Friends Association whose committee arranges social and fundraising events, bringing in a considerable amount of money for the school each year. Attendance is good at all parent consultation evenings. Parents are properly involved with students with special educational needs.
47. The school liaises well with other schools and colleges in the area. Through its recent status as a Science Specialist School, it has begun, this academic year, to enhance its links with its feeder schools. There are currently good links with feeder schools and induction arrangements provide smooth transition into the school. Positive teaching links with the student referral unit have also been set up. A further science link is the ICT link with N.A.S.A, combining the development of information technology skills with the wonderment of space.
48. The school maintains strong links with St Josephs Church and its parish. Students attend mass and celebrate Holy Days. They are very involved with raising money for charities at home and abroad. Their involvement reaches as far as a mission in Africa and greatly adds to cultural and personal development. Links with local employers are effective and an in-house careers service assists Years 10, 11 and the sixth form to gain work experience and employment.
49. The school's ethos of working for others is exemplified by the sixth form's involvement in the Millennium Volunteer project; a provision of 100 to 200 hours of community service to the more needy. This shows a very good level of community service and thus the sixth form is judged overall very good. The sixth form federated link with Richard Challoner continues strongly with joint management, staffing and resourcing. A concern is the lack of compatibility with student feedback between the two schools and the occasional loss of lesson time caused by the need to bus between sites.
50. Reports do not consistently provide sufficient information on National Curriculum attainment levels or specific guidance on what steps students need to take. Parents feel they do not get enough information on the curriculum itself in order to better understand and assist their daughters. The school acknowledged this in the current newsletter having picked up the concern in its own parent survey and plans are in hand to address it.
51. The school is working with the neighbouring community to acknowledge their needs in the development plans of the additional building to its site.
52. The school recognises that its links with the significant Korean community of New Malden are lacking. The effect is such that other than at parents meetings there is very little involvement in the school by this group, who also have become a significant part of the local business community. The school has intentions to develop this link.

## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership is good overall with very strong leadership by the headteacher. He has managed significant change most successfully. Management is satisfactory. Governance is good. The school gives good value for money.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Strong leadership is clearly focused on raising standards and improving provision.
- Financial management is good and the school is recovering from its deficit budget.
- The leadership team are effective in bringing about change.
- Developments in literacy and numeracy are not co-ordinated.
- Performance data and assessment are not yet used consistently throughout the school.

### Commentary

53. After a long period of stability, the school recently experienced significant changes within its leadership and governance teams. With 15 new governors and a third Chair of Governors, governors have undergone necessary development activities and training. Governance is good. The governing body is well organised with the usual committees in place. The governing body is increasingly influencing the work of the school and its policies. It plays a full part in planning the strategic direction of the school's developments and in managing its affairs. Governors actively support the school and are now well informed. Under the leadership of the new Chair of Governors, they are well directed and well placed to further challenge the school effectively. Governors have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses.
54. Leadership by the headteacher is very strong and is keenly focused on raising standards, improving provision and in moving the school forward. The headteacher inspires, motivates and successfully influences the staff and students. He has already successfully led and taken on board tremendous change in terms of managing the curriculum, addressing the deficit budget, improving standards and the quality of teaching and learning, and raising staff morale. With the full support of governors and staff, the school has acquired Science College status. Leadership has created effective teams with a sharp focus. All are very aware of the challenges that lie ahead, not least the proposed building plans for the school. The school provides successfully for students who do not respond well to school or have difficulty in learning. The options, work-related courses and work with the local student referral unit are all part of the effective, inclusive nature of this school.
55. Management is satisfactory overall. Procedures are clear and informed and are generally followed. Self-review and accountability are priorities and there is an on-going process of monitoring and evaluating outcomes. Educational priorities for the school are well articulated, and shared and have the full commitment of staff. Some practices (assessment and the planned support for students with special educational needs and those gifted and talented) have yet to be embedded consistently throughout the school. Developments in literacy and numeracy are not yet co-ordinated. The school now needs a period of stability to allow the good practices and policies to become embedded and consistently applied. Performance management and appraisal are well managed and the school is on schedule to obtain Investors in People status. There is a well-targeted programme of professional development. Teaching and non-teaching staff are very well supported. All staff are clear about their roles and responsibilities. Leadership of the curriculum and teaching by other key staff is good and they take the necessary steps to improve provision. Heads of year and of departments, some of whom are new in post, are addressing priorities appropriately and are forging cohesive teams.

56. Day-to-day administration in the office is good. The business manager, in conjunction with the headteacher and key staff, makes sure that the priorities identified in the development and financial planning are now part of the same process. The headteacher and governors have had to make some tough decisions, given the school's severe financial constraints. Restructuring of the management team, a reduction in staffing levels and increased class sizes were agreed and implemented as a direct result of reduced finances. The school is now in a more financially secure position and confidently expects to return a balanced budget within the next financial year. Such constraints can now be addressed and further expansion planned. Whilst best value is sought for all purchases, the school does not yet evaluate spending in order to establish the impact of this on standards. Expenditure per student, including those attending the sixth form, falls within the median quartile. Taking into account the value-added during their time in school, the standards students achieve, the quality of provision, and the strong ethos, the school gives good value for money.

**Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003**

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	£3022587	Balance from previous year	£-100955
Total expenditure	£2966824	Balance carried forward to the next	£-45192
Expenditure per student	£3466		

57. The recently appointed special education needs co-ordinator (SENCO) and leading teaching assistant have made a sound start on addressing the provision for students with special educational needs. Documentation is in good order, although some individual educational plans' (IEPs) targets are too general. Management ensures that provision is appropriate, and good for statemented students. Students make satisfactory progress and significant numbers of students in Years 7, 8 and 9 are removed from the register of special needs. Management of special educational needs overall is only satisfactory because heads of departments are not yet consistently undertaking their responsibilities. Good practices are seen in; art and design, geography, history, music and physical education.
58. Management of provision for students with English as an additional language is very good because the co-ordinator is well qualified and skilful at organising innovative schemes for supporting learning across the curriculum. She arranges English teaching for individuals or small groups of learners depending on the stage of language acquisition that each student has reached. Students respond well to this focused teaching and make good progress as a result. However, there are not enough teaching assistants to cope with the increasing demand for support.

**Sixth form**

59. Leadership of the sixth form is good and management is satisfactory. The head of sixth form has clear roles and responsibilities. Those in key posts work well together to ensure that the sixth form runs efficiently and effectively. Good management has secured some innovative ideas, particularly in ICT and linking across subjects to deliver key skills. The curriculum is improved, more comprehensive and is more relevant to students' needs. As a result, the sixth form has increased in number of students. Links with Richard Challoner School are amicable and there is a long established working partnership. The non-attendance of a few students is a concern. There is a shared commitment to challenge students and support them in achieving their full potential. The management and use of assessment, and the regular consultation with students about their progress, are particular strengths within the sixth form at Holy Cross. The recently converted sixth form house provides much needed study space. The sixth form provides good value for money.

# **PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES**

## **SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 and 4**

### **ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

#### **English**

The quality of provision in English is **good with many very good features**.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- GCSE and National Curriculum test results are well above national averages.
- Students' fluent use of language and confident speaking skills are reflected in their achievements in examinations.
- Highly skilled teachers challenge their students to achieve as well as they can.
- Students do not have sufficient opportunities for wider reading and independent research.
- Students have good relationships with their teachers and work co-operatively together.
- Some classrooms are overcrowded and more space is needed.
- Students have insufficient access to ICT within their classrooms.

#### **Commentary**

60. The good results attained by students in the National Curriculum tests and GCSE examinations is matched by the high quality of work observed in the majority of lessons. Students' fluent speaking skills enable them to express their ideas concisely and coherently, which supports their achievements in other subjects. Students come from a wide variety of backgrounds but, overall, standards on entry are above national expectations. As a result of well-designed teaching programmes following recent national guidelines, students make good progress and many achieve the highest levels in the national tests at the end of Year 9. Encouraged by the skilful teaching of the well-qualified and experienced staff, students continue to make good progress and achieve some very good results in the GCSE examinations, particularly in English literature. Most students read fluently although the range of books is limited by the constraints of examination requirements. Students write competently for a range of readers and purposes. Written work is presented to a very high standard and is marked well because most teachers indicate ways in which the work can be improved. Excellent wall displays celebrate the writing achievements of students of all abilities. Assessment is used constructively to monitor students' progress, although this information is not used sufficiently for planning across the whole curriculum.
61. The quality of teaching is good overall with some very good features. A particular strength is the skilful questioning techniques used, which encourages students to think for themselves and search out the meanings from stories, plays, poems and non-fiction material. As a result, students' knowledge and understanding are firmly embedded in the subject matter that is being studied. This is the main reason that students are achieving the high results, which compare favourably with other subjects and show good improvement since the last inspection. However, in some lessons the teachers talk too much and the quantity of tasks set is so demanding that many students struggle to keep up, and the quality of their learning is diminished.
62. The highly skilled subject leader, who is supported by her well-qualified and experienced team of teachers, manages the department very well. All are committed to the successful achievement of students of all abilities. Students with special educational needs make satisfactory progress and those who speak English as an additional language achieve well. Nonetheless, there is an urgent need for an assistant subject leader to provide positive support for students at both ends of the learning spectrum and to share the rapidly increasing workload



of this successful department. Although assessment practices are satisfactory overall, to improve further, more structured use of assessment schemes should be made in future planning and more time allowed during lessons for students to evaluate their work and consolidate their learning.

### **Language and literacy across the curriculum**

63. Students' fluent use of language and clearly developed speaking skills equip them well as confident learners in all subjects. However, literacy skills are not co-ordinated across the curriculum. Consequently, students' competence in speaking, reading and writing varies between departments. Most students contribute to class discussions and express their viewpoints coherently when invited to do so. Good examples were observed in physical education lessons where students use technical vocabulary appropriately to explain their understanding of a variety of physical forms and sequences. The majority of students read quickly and efficiently with a good understanding of their texts. However, a few students who speak English as an additional language have difficulties in translation and there are not enough teaching assistants to support the learning of all who need help. There are some outstanding examples of students' writing displayed around school and most students take pride in the presentation of their written work, but standards vary widely from one subject to another. The appointment of a co-ordinator to integrate the teaching of literacy skills across the curriculum and to build on the good practice in some departments and to improve the quality of students' achievements in all subjects would further consolidate standards.

### **Modern foreign languages**

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

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Good teaching in Years 10 and 11 leads to above average GCSE results.
- Teachers know their languages well and use them fluently in lessons.
- Most students enjoy languages and work hard; higher-attaining students have excellent attitudes.
- The school does not make effective provision for students wishing to study two languages.
- Teaching in Years 7 to 9 is not consistently challenging. Information from assessment and the National Curriculum level descriptions are not used sufficiently to pitch work at the right level for all students in Years 7 to 9.
- There is some good use of ICT, but the range of resources used in some lessons is too narrow.

#### **Commentary**

64. Standards are broadly average at the end of Year 9 and above average in Year 11. GCSE results were particularly good in 2003, and exceeded the department's target. Throughout the school, standards range from well below average to well above average, and in some years GCSE results are above average because of the high performance of the most able students. These students develop good fluency in speaking and writing, though some of their coursework contains grammatical errors that could be picked up by more careful checking. Standards in Year 9 are broadly average overall, but are held back by the system of having all students begin two languages in Year 7, one of which receives only one lesson per week. An optional second language in Years 8 and 9 also receives one lesson per week. This leads to gaps in all students' basic skills, and leaves too little time for lower-attaining students to consolidate their learning. Students with minority ethnic backgrounds, including those learning English as an additional language, are well represented in higher sets and their overall achievement is good. Across the school, achievement is satisfactory.

65. Teaching is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Year 11. Teachers know the languages they teach very well, and make very good use of them wherever possible. This contributes to listening skills and provides a very good example for students. In Years 10 and 11, teachers adapt work very effectively to examination requirements, and use assessment well to identify areas students most need to work on. They provide extensive and very effective additional teaching and support for students outside lessons. Teaching in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory, but the range of resources used in some lessons limits the scope of learning, and writing tasks often involve too much copying, so that students do not have enough practice in composing sentences and short texts for themselves. ICT enlivens learning and engages students' interest when it is used, but it is not always available. Teachers make good use of number work. Students' good attitudes to languages contribute to learning in most lessons, but there is some misbehaviour in a small minority of lessons in which the range of tasks students are given is too narrow to engage and challenge them. In Years 7 to 9, information from assessment and the National Curriculum level descriptions are not used sufficiently to pitch work at the right level for all students.
66. The head of department has been appointed very recently, and provides satisfactory leadership and management. There is a strong sense of co-operation and teamwork within the department, and standards are kept under review, with suitable targets for improvement. There are good plans to extend the use of ICT and the range of activities outside lessons. Throughout the school, however, provision for students wishing to learn two languages is not effective. While teachers work extremely hard to provide extra teaching in Years 10 and 11 – a twice-weekly German class begins at 7.45 in the morning – the number of students choosing to take a second language is very small. The timetable for Year 10 also makes learning more difficult by placing lessons on consecutive days.
67. Overall, improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. GCSE results have improved to reach above average levels, and the teaching of students with special educational needs has improved, so that it is now satisfactory. There has been some improvement in the range of resources, which are now adequate. The school has not, on the other hand, tackled the weakness in provision for students taking two languages that was identified in the last report, and this remains the most significant obstacle to further improvement.

## **MATHEMATICS**

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Attainment at the ends of Years 9 and Year 11 is significantly higher than the national average for all schools.
- Students who have English as an additional language achieve well and make good progress.
- Teaching and learning are good and raise standards of attainment and levels of achievement. The good management of assessment data raises the attainment and achievement of average and below average ability students.
- The use of learning objectives to monitor progress is not sharp enough and results in slowing progress and many students not knowing what they have to learn to improve.
- The implementation of the Key Stage 3 Mathematics Strategy is inconsistent and has yet to ensure the effective use of information technology and a plenary to improve progress.

### **Commentary**

68. Standards and achievement are good. The results of Year 9 national tests and GCSE examinations in 2003 were significantly above the national average and continued the good trend of improvement since the last inspection. The emphasis on language development ensures students who have English as an additional language are successful. The good

management of assessment data to organise teaching groups and target underachieving classes raises the attainment and achievement of average and below average ability students.

69. Results in national examinations and the progress made in lessons show that good value is added to the prior attainment of the majority of students. High ability students make sound progress, however, the below average percentages of Year 9 students achieving the higher Level 6 or above and Year 11 students achieving the highest GCSE A\* grades is due to teaching not addressing the needs of the gifted and talented. Students who have special educational needs make good progress when additional support is enhanced by the effective use of information technology. However, the absence of progress data being monitored against learning objectives results in the majority of students not knowing what they need to learn to improve and the majority of those with special educational needs making only sound progress.
70. Teaching and learning are good in Years 7 to 11 and have improved since the last inspection. There is now no evidence of unsatisfactory teaching or learning. Standards and achievement are raised because teachers use their very good subject expertise effectively to explain, demonstrate and model new learning and then follow up by asking searching questions that encourage students to take risks. Classroom relationships and the use of vocabulary, speaking and listening are so good that the making of a mistake is often taken as a learning opportunity. This results in students of all abilities and from different ethnic groups being confident enough to independently attempt new content and share and develop their methods and outcomes within a whole class discussion.
71. The implementation of the national mathematics strategy is not fully in place because a significant number of lessons make insufficient use of ICT and a plenary. This slows progress because the time the majority of students take to reach the lesson's objectives becomes extended into the next lesson.
72. Since the last inspection, the quality of leadership and management has been consistently good and is continuing with the newly appointed subject leader. A good audit of the provision has provided a clear vision to raise the attainment of the more able students and led to sharply focused monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning. This has resulted in effective performance management and expertise being used well, particularly when analysing data and matching teachers to the demands of the curriculum.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

73. The development of mathematics as part of the teaching and learning in other subjects has commenced with a sound whole school numeracy policy and the appointment of a co-ordinator. Although subjects such as art and design, geography and history and design and technology effectively use numeracy and graphicacy in their content, its impact on the students' progress and achievement in mathematics and the subject has not been measured. The participation of the mathematics department in Year 10 and Year 11 vocational courses is having a positive impact on student's numeracy skills by ensuring continuity and parity with the school's mathematics curriculum.

## **SCIENCE**

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Students achieve well and obtain good results in GCSE; standards are very high for those taking separate sciences.
- The new, flexible curriculum provides well for students' differing needs at GCSE.
- Accommodation for teaching science is unsatisfactory.

- Leadership is good, providing a clear vision for future developments.
- A good range of extra-curricular activities complements work in class.

## Commentary

74. The standards achieved are satisfactory in Years 7 to 9, and good in Years 10 and 11. Standards in Year 9 last year were well below those predicted from girls' prior attainment, but more stable staffing enables achievement to be satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 this year. The standard of students' work is now in line with the norm for their age in Year 9. Students' above average results at combined science at GCSE reflect good achievement. Achievement is very good for students taking separate science courses. In most lessons, students with special educational needs achieve well, as a result of carefully structured provision based on a detailed analysis of their needs. In a minority of lessons, provision is unsatisfactory and as a result achievement is unsatisfactory.
75. Throughout the school, students write well, expressing themselves clearly, and show a good grasp of both facts and principles. Technical terms are used well. Students manipulate both number and algebra effectively, and make appropriate use of graphs. The quality of GCSE coursework is good. The most able students ask probing questions to which teachers respond clearly, enabling students to learn difficult new ideas very effectively.
76. Teaching and learning are almost always satisfactory and often very good overall. In the best lessons, teachers have high expectations, challenging students to extend their thinking through careful questioning. Learning is effective because objectives are made clear at the start and reviewed at the end of lessons. Students are kept on task by the brisk pace and varied tasks, and their learning is linked to their wider experience. Teaching is based on good subject knowledge and resources are used well. In lessons where teaching and learning are satisfactory, or occasionally less than satisfactory, tasks lack sufficient challenge, or are poorly matched to students' abilities or to the purpose of the lesson. Some teaching is marred by errors in subject knowledge, especially in physics, and some opportunities to clarify ideas are missed. Regular, formal assessment provides ample accurate data, which is used well in many lessons, but not in all, to ensure teaching meets students' needs. Marking is usually thorough, though in a minority of books it is inconsistent. It records attainment but does not always show students how to improve their work. Most teachers, but not all, are aware of students' progress and make good use of this information in their planning. Good use is made of opportunities for self-assessment in some lessons.
77. Girls' respond very well to the teaching they receive, paying careful attention to the teacher and settling quickly to written work. In most lessons, their participation is very disciplined and they work very well together in pairs and groups.
78. The new flexible curriculum in Year 10 and 11 provides well for students' varying needs. The additional demands of separate science courses meet the needs of the most able students very well. Similarly, the new opportunity for some students in Year 10 to take only single subject science enables them to take a more appropriate combination of qualifications at 16. These arrangements work well. Designation as a Science College has enabled additional staff to be appointed to support students' learning in class. Accommodation is unsatisfactory and too many science lessons have to be taught elsewhere in the school, limiting students' progress. Resources are, in general, adequate but are more limited for work with older students. Good use is made of ICT in many lessons, but it is not yet a fully integral part of students' learning.
79. Leadership is good with a clear vision of the role science plays in the school. Management is satisfactory. Science is well organized and some important developments have already taken place. However, although a good deal of monitoring of teaching takes place, it is as yet, insufficient to ensure full consistency in teaching practice. The school has made satisfactory improvement since the last inspection.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in information and communication technology is **satisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are improving through good teachers' subject knowledge.
- Accommodation and resources for ICT have improved but are still unsatisfactory.
- Standards in Years 7 to 9 and Year 10 examination courses are above average.
- Good leadership means there is a strong commitment to improvement.
- Assessment data is recorded systematically but insufficient use is made of it to inform students of their standards and to challenge them to do better.
- There is a wide range of courses available in Years 10 to 13.

### Commentary

80. In 2003, the results of teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 were above the national average. The students' work seen during the inspection and discussions with them indicate that this is also currently the case. No students were entered for GCSE examinations in 2003. The results for the five Year 11 students who took GNVQ were average. In Year 10, GCSE and GNVQ standards are above average. In Years 11 to 13 standards of work in GNVQ and advanced vocational courses are average.
81. Most students have good skill and confidence in using computers. Work in Year 7 shows good progress from primary school levels. Presentations are of above average standard with imaginative use of text and graphics. By the end of Year 9, students have a good understanding of how to use a database and are aware of the impact on society of storing personal data.
82. Teaching and learning are good overall, particularly in Years 7 to 9 and for the examination groups in Year 10. The good subject knowledge of teachers is used well in supporting individual students but opportunities are often missed to challenge students intellectually. The use of homework is inconsistent. In Year 10, all students study effectively for the 'Driving Licence' in computing skills but progress is limited by insufficient curriculum time. GCSE students achieve well. Good teacher support enables students in mixed year-group vocational courses to make satisfactory progress but the pace of sixth form GNVQ students is too low. Behaviour is good and students respond well when working independently. Students with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language are identified and they achieve well.
83. Leadership is good and management is satisfactory. There is a strong team commitment to improvement. Recent curriculum changes and greater teacher expertise have been instrumental in significantly raising standards in Year 10. An innovative curriculum project enables some students to video-link with a NASA scientist in USA and students in Japan. Assessment data is recorded systematically but insufficient use is made of it to inform students of their standards and to challenge them to do better. In Years 7 to 9, aspects of the national strategy have been introduced but it is not yet fully in place.
84. Since the last inspection, standards and resources have improved. Resources are used efficiently but they are still well below guidelines. The technician provides good support. There have been improvements to the range of courses available in Years 10 to 13 and the level of technical support. There is good capacity for further improvement.

### Information and communication technology across the curriculum

85. There is a growing contribution to ICT provision from other subjects. Nevertheless, unsatisfactory accommodation and resources limit further development. Students' work shows

evidence of Internet research, high quality desktop publishing and spreadsheets for coursework in many subjects. Access to the computer resources outside of lesson times is very good. A software program is used well in collecting assessment data but the use of the data to set targets and raise standards is developing. The school web site works well and is a useful source of information. Training in the use of interactive white boards is developing, enabling for example the very effective use of one for the starter activity seen in a French lesson. In media studies, ICT resources are satisfactory and imaginative work was seen in graphics, video capture and editing. There was evidence of good practice in English, mathematics, data capture in science, image manipulation in art, digital cameras and computer aided design in design and technology, composition software in music.

#### **Example of outstanding practice**

**The school a leading partner in an international project, Science Through Arts (STAR), uses NASA on-line material and human resources to showcase work internationally through an arts project.**

**A class of Year 7 students has researched the scientific aspects of travelling to and living on Mars. Queries are being emailed to NASA scientist Joe Kolecki who will answer them live via video-link. Students are writing a drama based on their research and will then perform it, relayed live to the partner school in Japan. This year's project builds on the previous one centred on a science fiction story. Students were excited at the opportunities presented and appreciated their role as global citizens. [www.grc.nasa.gov/WWW/K-12/STAR/main.htm](http://www.grc.nasa.gov/WWW/K-12/STAR/main.htm)**

## **HUMANITIES**

The focus was on geography and history, which were inspected and reported on in full. Religious education was not inspected or reported on.

### **Geography**

Provision in geography is **good**.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Good teaching and learning are raising the standards of all students.
- Leadership and management are good and there is a strong team ethos.
- Positive classroom relationships have created a productive working environment.
- Assessment in Years 7 to 9 is not sufficiently focused on what individual students need to do to further improve their learning.
- Students are encouraged to take responsibility for their own work.
- The limited range of extra-curricular opportunities restricts students' achievement.

#### **Commentary**

86. Standards in Years 7 to 9 are above average and student achievement is good. Standards at GCSE in 2003, and in work seen in Years 10 and 11, are in line with national averages. Achievement at GCSE is satisfactory. Consistently good teaching, effective systems of assessment and closer monitoring of students' coursework are now raising standards in Years 10 and 11. There are no significant differences between the achievement of those speaking English as an additional language, or those with special educational needs.
87. Students have a good knowledge and understanding of patterns and processes in their study of earthquakes, volcanoes and other global hazards. They accurately select and record evidence about countries, and confidently use appropriate geographical vocabulary. However, less able students are restricted in their ability to analyse and evaluate written evidence sources by their low levels of literacy.

88. The quality of teaching and learning is good and this is an important factor in raising standards. Teachers set clear learning objectives and make effective use of a wide variety of teaching resources. However, restricted access to information and communication technology limits students' opportunities to undertake the individual research enquiries planned for in the departmental scheme of work. Good classroom relationships encourage students to play an active role in their own learning and most respond positively to new challenges. The department has worked very hard to raise literacy levels and most students now have the confidence and expertise to undertake more extended written assignments. Teachers use praise and sensitive encouragement to enable students with special educational needs and other learning difficulties to play an active role in classroom learning. Work is carefully matched to the needs of individual students, and good quality extension assignments are provided to stretch and challenge the more able students.
89. The subject is well led and managed. There is an effective team approach to raising standards and achievement in all areas of the department's work. Assessment systems are good in Years 10 and 11, and regular testing allows teachers to track individual student progress. However, this tracking is less effective in Years 7 to 9, and efforts now need to be more carefully targeted to enable individual students to understand how they can improve their work. There are too few opportunities for fieldwork at present and this places limitations on students' achievement. The department is addressing this issue and there are already plans in place to resolve this problem. The single lesson allocation in Year 8 reduces syllabus coverage and restricts the rate of student progress. Staffing and learning resources are very well managed. Good improvement has been made since the last inspection.

## History

Provision in history is **very good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students are inspired by the very good teaching they receive and work very hard.
- Strong leadership and management are raising standards.
- Relationships between students and teachers are very positive.
- Students are encouraged to take on greater responsibility for their own learning.
- Assessment and target setting for students are very effective in Years 10 and 11, but need to be further developed in Years 7 to 9.
- GCSE results are above the national average and reflect good achievement.

### Commentary

90. Standards in Year 9 are above average, and this represents good achievement in relation to the attainment of students when entering the school. Standards in work seen in Years 10 and 11 are above the national average, and results in the 2003 GCSE examination were also above average. Students achieve well because of the very high standard of teaching, good systems of assessment and a strong focus on improving examination techniques. There are no significant differences in the achievement of those who speak English as an additional language, or those with special educational needs.
91. Students are encouraged to undertake their own research enquiries, to engage in collaborative work in class and to play an active role in their own learning. Most, especially the more able students, respond enthusiastically to this challenge. Students have a sound knowledge and understanding of historical concepts, and are developing their skills in the critical evaluation and analysis of historical source material. Positive relationships contribute to students' progress because teachers value students opinions, and students thrive when taking on greater responsibility for their own learning.

92. Very good teaching is a key factor in raising standards. Teachers' planning is extremely thorough, their subject knowledge is very good and they use a wide variety of teaching strategies to set challenging targets for the whole of the ability range. Sensitive questioning allows students of all abilities to play a full part in lessons, and work is closely matched to individual needs. A strong emphasis is placed on the improvement of literacy so important key vocabulary is learnt when new topics are taught. This, together with the use of guided writing structures, gives all students the confidence and expertise to write more extended pieces of work. Students in Years 10 and 11 are fully aware of what they need to do to improve their work, and their progress is closely monitored to ensure individuals achieve their full potential. However, students in Years 7 to 9 need more guidance about how they can improve their work.
93. Leadership and management are very good. The subject leader has a clear view of priorities and the department is constantly striving to raise students' achievement. Curriculum plans are very good and worksheets are adapted to fully meet the needs of higher ability students as well as those students with learning difficulties. Students have access to a comprehensive range of resources, but wider access to computer research facilities is desirable. Good assessment systems are in place, but are not as well developed in Years 7 to 9. School and departmental evaluation of examination data is still at an early stage of development. The single lesson allocation in Year 7 reduces syllabus coverage and restricts the pace of student achievement. Very good progress has been made since the last inspection and the subject is now a real strength of the school.

## **TECHNOLOGY**

### **Design and technology**

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

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teachers plan and deliver interesting lessons that students enjoy.
- Students have good opportunities to use ICT resources effectively.
- Students work collaboratively and show an interest in each other's work.
- Assessment is not informing students of their achievement as they move from one project to the next.
- There are insufficient opportunities in Years 7 to 9 for work with resistant materials and systems and control.
- Accommodation is in need of refurbishment.

#### **Commentary**

94. Standards and achievement are currently good overall. They are very good by the end of Year 9 and good by the end of Year 11. Standards are at least good and often very good at the end of Year 9, because better quality teaching is having a direct impact and there are more instances of very good and excellent teaching. Fewer students now take GCSE in design and technology and the current work seen is of a higher standard than before. The GCSE examination results, for 2003, were in-line with national figures. They were above for resistant materials and textiles, and below for food, and graphic products.
95. In all years, students show attention to detail and take a pride in their work. They evaluate their work as it progresses, know what is needed to improve it and are given opportunities to do so. Students of all abilities can measure accurately and finish their made outcomes to a high quality and with good consideration of aesthetics. They have a good understanding of the properties of the materials being used. They work safely and show respect for property and each other. Folder work is completed to a very good standard and shows how design ideas are developed to final outcomes. In all lessons, students work collaboratively, share ideas and



help each other. They enjoy the subject, settle to work quickly, stay on task and meet teacher expectations.

96. Curriculum planning for Years 7 to 9 provides good projects for food, graphics, resistant materials and textiles. There are very good links to other cultures and curriculum areas. For example, in Year 8, the 'rice' project includes activities in food and geography with good links to citizenship through 'Fairtrade Fortnight'. One student, as an extension activity, had produced an excellent PowerPoint presentation on different types of rice, their origins and uses. Students use ICT resources very well, for example in all lessons their use of digital cameras. Projects provide good opportunities for CAD/CAM, especially in textiles where computer controlled sewing machines are used to produce impressive embroidered designs. These opportunities are not yet extended to make greater use of materials and systems and control.
97. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good in all years. Some very good teaching was observed in Years 7 and 10 and some excellent teaching in Year 9. Teachers plan their lessons to include students of all abilities. They adapt their plans as the lesson proceeds to react to the pace of students' achievement. Resources are managed effectively, especially when they are limited. Expectations are made explicit at the start of each lesson. The brisk lesson pace keeps students focused on their work and extension work is always available to challenge more able students. Lessons are structured so that students can use the limited time available efficiently to design and make their products. Lesson plenaries are used to make very good checks on what has been learnt and understood. This information is used to plan subsequent lessons. High-ability students are given opportunities to extend their work through self-directed endeavour. For example, in a Year 9 textiles lesson, one student who had completed her 'bag' project had used the skills and knowledge learnt to design and make a matching skirt.
98. The quality of leadership and management is satisfactory. The curriculum co-ordinator has allowed subject specialists to develop good provision in their areas. However, there is insufficient time to ensure a balanced provision in Years 7 to 9. There have been insufficient staff development opportunities to improve and update subject knowledge in the changing nature of design and technology education. Assessment information is not used coherently to inform students of how well they are doing to meet National Curriculum levels.
99. During the inspection, health and safety issues were reported concerning accommodation. Specialist rooms are well equipped and tools are maintained in good condition. There is very good technician support in food technology, which helps the effectiveness of teaching in this area.
100. Improvement has been satisfactory since the last inspection. Teaching quality and standards have been raised. The Years 7 to 9 curriculum and the accommodation are still in need of improvement.

## **VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS**

### **Art and design**

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

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- There is good and very good teaching.
- Standards at the end of Year 9 are above national expectations.
- Independent learning skills are well developed.
- There is a wide range of media and learning resources.
- There is little development of ICT as part of the taught courses.

- The time allocation in Year 11 slows progress.
- There is no planned programme to challenge gifted and talented students.

## Commentary

101. Current standards at the end of Year 9 are good. GCSE results in 2003 were close to the national average and this maintains an upward trend in recent years. Predictions indicate an improvement this year. As the result of good planning and teaching, achievement in class and over time is good overall
102. From students' early days in school, teachers place a strong emphasis on the development of drawing skills and the use of colour. They also learn to write informatively about their work and to evaluate its strengths and weaknesses enhancing their literacy and evaluative skills.
103. Overall, students in Year 11 are working at levels that are in line with the national average. Current achievement is at least satisfactory and often good. Many students learn to further develop good skills in drawing and painting. With encouragement and good support, they learn to organise their own research and learning. Research is often extensive, always inspired by a famous artist, and this is influential in their work. They take much care in the presentation of their workbooks and their finished pieces. Learning and progress are inhibited by the reduction in time allocation from three hours in Year 10 to two hours in Year 11. Students taking the new GNVQ course are working well. The course is well planned. Students are learning successfully to manipulate a range of two-and three-dimensional materials through a challenging and interesting variety of tasks. Access to computers as a means of supporting and extending work is very restricted in all years.
104. Teaching and learning are good, often very good in Years 10 and 11. Teachers have high expectations of all students. Planning is thorough. Assessment procedures inform students of their standards and ways in which to improve their work. This is particularly effective in Years 10 and 11, where target setting focuses on areas for improvement. Homework is set and marked regularly as an aid to learning. Teachers create a stimulating and ordered environment for learning to take place. Students with special educational needs are well integrated. Good support enables them to achieve well. More planned opportunities are needed for those in all years who have been identified as gifted and talented. The end-of-lesson review can be more effectively used in evaluating outcomes and in allowing students to express their opinions.
105. Attitudes and relationships are very good and most students have a very positive attitude to learning as the result of good planning and teaching. They behave very well because they enjoy their lessons. Art makes a good contribution to students', spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
106. Art is well managed by an experienced and enthusiastic specialist who sets and maintains good standards. Organisation and planning are thorough. Records are well maintained. More use can be made of this data in order to identify underachievement as well as progress made by differing groups of students over time. This in turn can inform planning and development. A good team spirit has been established and limited accommodation made to work well. There has been good improvement since the last inspection.

## Music

Provision in music is **good**.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- The accommodation is poor and restricts the opportunities that are offered to students.
- Standards by Year 11 are above average.

- There is good provision for developing students' performing skills in lessons and in extra-curricular activities.

## **Commentary**

107. Six students took the 2003 GCSE examination. No comparison can be made with the national average because of the small number taking the examination. However, all students gained grades within the A\*-C range.
108. For current students, standards by the end of Year 9 are average. Students enter school with variable musical experiences and achieve well. By Year 9, students show an understanding of basic music notation. They use a given text and add different vocal techniques to create an effective, atmospheric piece. They listen to music attentively and make comments about it. They know some musical terms, but occasionally have to be reminded to use these when talking about music. Students with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language make the same progress as other students. More musically able students make very good progress, both in lessons and in extra-curricular activities.
109. By Year 11, standards are above average and students achieve very well. Students show a good musical knowledge and perform well, both as individuals and as ensemble players. They show skill at improvising and an ability to create short pieces based on a given stimulus. Their compositions are well structured, with some development of initial ideas.
110. Teaching and learning are good in Year 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11. Lessons are well planned and good provision is made for developing students' confidence as performers. Teachers use their own subject knowledge well to aid learning. For example, in a Year 10 lesson, the teacher improvised a melody on the vibraphone above a twelve bar blues accompaniment. As a result, students understood the changing chord sequence and how additional melodic notes might be added to create the style of the blues. Satisfactory provision is made for developing students' literacy and numeracy skills in lessons. The provision for ICT is satisfactory and is being developed further by the department.
111. Leadership and management are good. The head of department has a clear overview of the provision and promotes the subject well within the school. The satisfactory assessment procedures are being reviewed to ensure that they more accurately chart each student's progress between Years 7 and 9. Over 100 students take part in extra-curricular activities. The choir makes a valuable contribution to the musical life of the school. Over 45 students receive instrumental lessons. Opportunity is provided for students to perform in concerts both in and out of school. Plans are in place to improve the accommodation, but at present it is poor. Although the resources are satisfactory overall, there is a shortage of instruments when two classes have lessons at the same time.
112. Improvement since the last inspection is good. Standards in Year 11 have risen. Students' attendance at extra-curricular activities has improved and there is now a good range of public performances. Although the ICT suite is used for music technology lessons, there is only one computer in the music department.

## **Drama and performing arts**

113. Drama and performing arts were sampled. Standards reached in GCSE and AS level examinations are consistently above national expectations. This high attainment was reflected in the quality of learning in the two lessons observed. Students have a mature, responsible attitude and work co-operatively to devise their improvisations based on a given situation or textual theme. They discuss the outcomes constructively and develop very good critical skills by evaluating the meaning conveyed through the drama and predicting the impact on their audiences. An excellent programme of extra-curricular activities, ranging from annual

performance tours in Hungary to workshop sessions with national theatre companies, further enriches students' learning.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **satisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Effective teaching and strong leadership result in above average standards and good achievement Years 7 to 9.
- Unsatisfactory accommodation depresses standards and limits opportunities especially in Years 10 and 11.
- Good provision and take up of extra-curricular activities counterbalances the effect of low curriculum time in Years 7 to 9.
- Assessment is not driving up standards sufficiently well in Years 7 to 9.
- The Key Stage 3 literacy strategy is effectively and consistently taught.
- Too few able students take up the full GCSE course.

### Commentary

114. Effective teaching and leadership result in average standards overall and above in Years 7 to 9. This represents satisfactory achievement overall and good achievement in Years 7 to 9. Progress of students with educational needs follows a similar pattern. Deficiencies of provision are largely due to unsatisfactory accommodation, which is a barrier to learning. Standards are depressed by lack of full sized pitches, which stops many students in Years 10 and 11 from fully developing advanced skills and tactics in games such as football and hockey. Despite this handicap, GCSE examination results are in line with the national averages and this is because theory is taught exceptionally well. However, results are slightly lower than those in other subjects as too few of the most able students take the full GCSE. Standards in trampolining, dance and netball are good. The school has been awarded the 'Sports mark' for good provision in physical education and sport. Good provision and take up of extra-curricular activities reinforces, extends and deepens learning opportunities and compensates, to some extent, for low curriculum time Years 7 to 9. A significant minority of students achieve the very highest standards.
115. Teaching and learning are good throughout the school with some very good features. Teachers' good knowledge, student management, very good use of time and lesson planning lead to effective learning of basic skills, knowledge and understanding across the range of activities taught. Students' 'selecting and applying' and 'evaluating and improving' skills are developing well, particularly in gymnastics, dance and trampolining. Work is effectively matched to the needs of all students, enabling all students to make at least satisfactory progress. Despite this, the teaching of dance in the cramped and unsuitable canteen is a barrier to learning opportunities, particularly for more able students, and is a barrier to achievement. Opportunities are missed in lessons to assess using the National Curriculum levels. Students do not know what their short-term targets are in order to improve. They respond very positively to teaching and are well motivated, considerate of others and co-operative. Students' behaviour is always good; they are supportive and considerate to all, including the disadvantaged.
116. The leadership of a strong team is good. As excellent role models, teachers imbue students with a desire to succeed. Imaginative curriculum planning keeps students effectively focused on specific goals. The Junior Sports Leaders' Award run in Year 11 makes a good contribution to students' social and cultural development. Progress since the last inspection is satisfactory and examination results have improved. Despite best efforts, the school has been unable to rectify the lack of adequate indoor and outdoor accommodation and, until this is satisfactorily

resolved, the department's capacity to implement further improvements will be severely hampered.

## **PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP**

Personal, social and health education and citizenship are delivered as part of a combined course, which includes careers education, in Years 7 to 11. Personal, social and health education planning and documentation was sampled and was found to be in good order. Lessons were observed as part of the citizenship combined course offered.

### **Citizenship**

Provision in citizenship is **good**.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The co-ordinator, supported by staff, has a very clear vision of what is achievable and what has yet to be achieved.
- Excellent curriculum plans for Years 7 to 11 have been developed which fully meet statutory requirements.
- Students respond enthusiastically to the very wide range of opportunities available to demonstrate responsibility.
- The effectiveness of the core provision and the contributions from other curriculum areas has not yet been evaluated.
- Teaching does not always encourage students to express their ideas, to listen to, and to consider the opinions of others during discussions.

### **Commentary**

117. Standards and achievement are currently good overall. Teachers and students have a clear understanding of what is expected in lessons and they are positive about the role of citizenship in their personal development. Students of all abilities achieve well because the activities are differentiated to meet their individual needs. There is a very wide range of opportunities for participation and responsible action, which extends beyond school. For example, the 'Fairtrade Fortnight', Global Citizenship and video-conferencing with Japan. These are responded to willingly and with enthusiasm. In lessons, students quickly complete tasks and there are sufficient opportunities to challenge and extend their opinions about becoming responsible citizens.
118. Curriculum planning for Years 7 to 11 meets statutory requirements and addresses the three strands for citizenship of knowledge, the skills of enquiry and communication and participation and responsible action. Form tutors teach the lessons using schemes developed by the curriculum co-ordinator. These are well resourced using worksheets, inputs from visiting speakers and videos, which encourage students to record and analyse their views within the principles of becoming good citizens. Emphasis is placed on providing good factual information and prompt sheets to promote teacher-led well-informed discussions.
119. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good. It is very good when teachers allow students to express ideas and to promote discussion. Lessons are planned with clear learning outcomes, using a wide range of teaching methods designed to deliver the material in an interesting way. However, in some lessons teachers do not place enough emphasis on developing independent learning skills or the speaking and listening skills required for sustaining discussion. As a consequence many students do not contribute as fully as they should.
120. Leadership and management are very good. The curriculum co-ordinator has an excellent vision, sense of purpose and meets the high aspirations of line-managers. Form tutors are

very supportive and recognise the importance and value of citizenship education. Priority has been given to developing citizenship within the existing schemes for PSHE (personal, social and health education) and careers for Years 7 to 11. In each of these aspects there is very good progression for students' personal development. For example, the careers and citizenship link in Year 8 considers stereotyping in employment, which is effectively built on in Years 9 to 11. A very thorough audit has been undertaken to identify individual subject contributions and links to the core provision delivered by form tutors. However, the data have yet to be analysed because the co-ordinator has insufficient time available. Similarly, monitoring and quality assurance procedures have not evaluated the current provision to identify strengths and areas requiring development. One of these areas is the thoroughness and constructiveness of recording, reporting and assessment of student achievement.

121. Since the last inspection a very good start has been made on the provision of education in citizenship. Secure plans are in place for all year groups and the school is providing very good opportunities for students to become informed citizens.

## SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

122. There are over twice as many students in Year 12 as in Year 13, and some popular subjects in Year 12 are not taught at all in Year 13. This inspection focused mainly on subjects that are taught in both years. Some subjects are taught entirely at Richard Challoner school and have not been inspected or sampled for this reason. Five subjects and courses were inspected and are reported on in detail here. Work in other subjects and courses was sampled and contributed to the overall picture of teaching and learning in the school.

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2003.

### Level 3 GCE AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and Design	8	37.5	83.8	0.0	27.8	10.0	32.5
Biology	6	66.7	67.0	0.0	11.3	18.3	21.3
Business Studies	4	100.0	77.5	0.0	17.6	22.5	27.0
Chemistry	1	100.0	75.3	0.0	15.7	20.0	25.4
Communication Studies	10	90.0	88.0	30.0	27.4	35.0	33.8
Drama	2	100.0	88.5	50.0	22.3	45.0	32.2
English/English Language	1	100.0	84.9	0.0	19.7	20.0	30.0
English Literature	5	80.0	86.9	0.0	20.3	26.0	30.9
French	8	50.0	77.6	0.0	17.9	13.8	27.1
Geography	2	50.0	76.5	0.0	24.0	10.0	28.6
History	8	62.5	81.8	12.5	21.8	21.3	29.7
Information Technology	6	83.3	69.8	0.0	12.5	23.3	22.8
Other Social Studies	1	100.0	72.3	0.0	19.4	20.0	25.8
Physics	3	66.7	79.4	33.3	22.6	26.7	29.1
Religious Studies	5	60.0	81.9	0.0	24.6	16.0	31.0
Sociology	4	25.0	73.3	0.0	20.5	7.5	26.4

### Level 3 GCE A level and VCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and Design	5	100.0	98.9	0.0	54.1	76.0	90.0
Biology	8	100.0	96.8	50.0	42.1	80.0	80.7
Chemistry	2	100.0	98.1	50.0	52.3	90.0	87.3
Communication Studies	31	100.0	99.6	29.0	41.1	80.0	84.1
Drama	4	100.0	99.7	50.0	43.7	100.0	85.4
English/ English Language	14	100.0	99.5	28.6	37.3	77.1	81.8
English literature	23	100.0	99.6	30.4	46.7	79.1	86.7
French	4	100.0	98.8	25.0	51.0	80.0	87.3
Geography	2	100.0	98.9	0.0	50.3	50.0	87.7
History	6	100.0	99.0	16.7	48.0	73.3	86.2
Mathematics	8	100.0	97.6	37.5	59.5	77.5	91.7
Music	1	100.0	99.2	0.0	40.0	80.0	82.3
Other Social Studies	1	0.0	98.0	0.0	45.5	0.0	84.0
Physics	1	100.0	97.9	0.0	50.5	80.0	85.9
Religious Studies	10	100.0	99.1	0.0	48.0	70.0	86.4
Sociology	3	100.0	98.5	0.0	46.4	66.7	85.1
Spanish	1	100.0	98.1	0.0	51.3	80.0	87.4
Sports/PE Studies	7	100.0	98.7	14.3	41.4	71.4	82.3

### VCE results by subject

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England				
Media Communications & Production	6	100.0	N/a	83.3	N/a	96.7	N/a

## ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

### ENGLISH

Provision in English is **good**.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good and students have a strong commitment to their learning.
- Assessment and marking are good and students know how to improve.
- Leadership is good and the head of department leads a strong and committed team.
- The department lacks administrative support.
- ICT is used effectively to promote independent learning.

#### Commentary

123. The A-level examination results in 2003 at grades A to E were above average in English Literature, and in line with the national average in English language and literature. More

students gained the top three grades in the A-level English literature examination taken at the end of Year 13 than their national counterparts. Results have improved since the time of the last inspection in both subjects, although the improvement has not been consistent from year to year. Standards in work seen are above national expectations in English literature and are broadly in line with the standard expected nationally in English language and literature. Students' achievement overall is satisfactory. As at the time of the previous inspection standards are higher in the GCSE examinations taken at the end of Year 11 than in the A-level examinations. However, the fact that more students have chosen to study English literature in 2003 than in 2002 reflects the increased confidence students have in the school.

124. Teaching and learning in the sixth form are good. Students learn well because they are committed and want to do well, and because teachers are knowledgeable about the subject and keen to impart their knowledge to the students. Teachers plan lessons well to ensure that the syllabus is fully covered and that in most cases lessons move at a brisk pace. Students learn well because tasks are varied and interesting. In the best lessons, teachers provide good opportunities for students to undertake their own research, using ICT effectively to further their understanding of the texts studied and to present their research to their fellow-students. Marking is thorough and offers students clear guidelines on what they need to do to improve the quality of their work.
125. Leadership of the department is good. The head of department leads a strong and committed team. She manages the department well.

### **Language and literacy across the curriculum**

126. The provision for developing students' communication skills is good. Students are encouraged to discuss ideas at a high level, to widen their knowledge through books and ICT and to use sophisticated language to express their ideas in writing. Important, subject-specific words are displayed in most classrooms. Students are articulate, speak well and most are willing to participate in pair and group activities and to contribute to class discussions when given the opportunity.

## **MATHEMATICS**

The inspection covered the AS-level and A-level examination courses offered by the school. Provision for students re-sitting GCSE mathematics was sampled.

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- AS and A level students are achieving well and increasing in number.
- Good classroom management results in students from different ethnic groups becoming fully integrated and very confident in their own ability.
- Teachers use their very good subject knowledge to plan a good range of learning approaches, including some developed for the Key Stage 3 Strategy.
- The quality of individual support is very good, and gifted and talented students are successfully accelerated and fully developed into independent learners.
- The department has not been sufficiently self-evaluative in measuring the impact of its decisions regarding the choice of GCSE syllabus and the timing of AS module examinations.
- The use of ICT to improve students' understanding is underdeveloped, particularly in statistics.
- Assessment is not sufficiently focused on content enabling students know what they need to do to improve and reach their target grades.



## Commentary

127. The number of Holy Cross students who sat GCE A level examination in 2003 was too small to make a comparison with the national average but the spread of grades was close to the national distribution and all passed. The results over time show that there is no significant difference in the attainment and achievement of students for whom English is an additional language.
128. The absence of higher GCSE grades in Year 11 leads to below average attainment on entry to AS level courses in Year 12. The outcomes of Year 13 examinations and the above average standards being reached in present AS and A level groups means that over time students are achieving well. The higher and average ability students are making good progress, particularly in algebra, because they willingly discuss and explain patterns between different graphical representations and seek advice as they begin to understand the language of complex probability. Work is well presented and very detailed.
129. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good and results in good achievement. Good classroom management results in students from different ethnic groups becoming fully integrated and very confident in their own ability. Teachers use their very good subject knowledge to plan a good range of learning approaches, including some developed for the Key Stage 3 Strategy, to address complex ideas such as inverse functions. The provision of clear and challenging learning objectives is routine and leads to the majority of students effectively applying previous knowledge and independently assessing their progress. The use of ICT is underdeveloped, particularly in statistics, to improve student understanding of the affects of small changes to signs and the inclusion of rogue data.
130. The provision is highly respected by students and leads to the majority of students working productively with the intention of completing the full A-level course. However, marking and day-to-day records are not sufficiently focused on content, so students know what they need to do to improve and reach their target grades.
131. Leadership and management are good and have brought about improvement since the last inspection. The number of female students has increased so they now represent 45 per cent of the present Year 12 AS cohort. The quality of individual support is so good that, in addition to the AS and A level provision, gifted and talented students are successfully accelerated and fully developed into independent learners and GCSE re-sit candidates have several opportunities to work with teachers and achieve higher grades. However, the department has not been sufficiently self-evaluative in measuring the impact of its own decisions. Specifically, the choice of GCSE syllabus, the order in which the AS is taught and the timing of AS module examinations may have led to the high number of students who, during 2002-2003, left before completing their course.

## Mathematics across the curriculum

132. The development of mathematics as part of the teaching and learning in other subjects has had a positive impact on achievement in vocational courses, key skills and in science where students use sophisticated statistical techniques to analyse the results of their experiments. Nevertheless, the choice of modules for AS and A level mathematics does not allow students to develop their coursework in other subjects as part of their mathematics qualification, and there are no plans at present to extend the development of the school's numeracy policy so it includes the post-16 curriculum.

## SCIENCE

The focus was on biology. Chemistry was sampled, one Year 12 lesson was observed. Teaching was satisfactory, students worked collaboratively in preparing and purifying a halogenoalkane,

followed by a whole class questioning session which could have challenged the higher attainers more by linking the organic reactions with redox chemistry.

## Biology

The provision in biology is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well by the end of Year 13 because of good teaching.
- The quality of leadership is good and provides a clear vision for the subject.
- The quality of marking is encouraging good progress.
- High quality relationships between teacher and students create an atmosphere in which learning thrives.
- Analysis of specific learning targets are not sufficiently sharp.
- Wider opportunities for rigorous intellectual challenge, application and argument.

### Commentary

133. Results in the 2003 AS and A Level examinations were in line with the national average, which is an improvement over 2002. Students come into Year 12 with standards that are broadly average. Current students in Year 13 are achieving well in relation to their prior attainment at GCSE. The department has detailed information on each individual student, which clearly demonstrates that the majority of students achieve at least their predicted grades and in some cases exceed them.
134. Standards of work seen are broadly in line with national expectations and in some cases exceed them. For example, analysis of a sample of investigations shows that the best work accurately tabulates trends in results and fully explains anomalies to make good, critical evaluations. In the case of some lower attainers, on the other hand, there is scope for sharply developing skills of application and argument and in justifying statements.
135. Students in Year 12 showed good understanding of the transpiration stream, building well on their previous knowledge. Higher attainers were able to explain – quite confidently – pathways for water movement across a root using the concept of active transport. Year 13 students are achieving standards of work close to or above their expected grades. These students engage well with the concept of stabilising, directional and disruptive selection in the context of the genetics component of their syllabus.
136. Teaching and learning are consistently good, and are supported effectively by thorough planning and high expectations. A well-qualified and enthusiastic teacher who demonstrates very good subject knowledge teaches students. Lessons are well structured but, in some cases, not so well resourced. For example, in a Year 12 lesson use of better visual resources on the translocation of organic solutes in plants would have enhanced learning gains in the case of some students. All lessons observed incorporated several activities that enabled students to work independently or as a group. Students were able to answer the questions asked of them but were less confident to enter into detailed discussions. Higher attainers, in Year 12 in particular, are not sufficiently engaged in higher order analytical thinking. The quality of marking is a strength. Assessments and homework for both Year 12 and 13 students are marked in detail, with many constructive comments that help the students to improve. Misconceptions identified feed into subsequent lesson planning. Relationships between the teacher and students as well as between the students themselves are very good. This gives rise to a very pleasant working atmosphere. The teacher is supportive of all the students and ensures that they all understand the work covered by asking well-structured specific questions throughout lessons. In discussions, students appreciated the support and guidance given by the teacher and the fact that she was prepared to help and assist outside lessons.

137. The leadership and management are good. The head of department (who undertakes all the AS/A teaching) is an industrious and caring professional keen to make a difference. Technical support is good in contributing to the quality of learning. Performance in the subject is effectively evaluated through careful analysis of students' test results and attendance data. It is not yet used to identify sharply specific learning targets in biology for students, which would be a useful extension of this analysis. The department is aware of the need to integrate central assessment data generated by ALIS with departmental assessment information, with a view to setting and rigorously monitoring student specific targets. Resources continue to be updated, and more is planned as a result of the successful bid for Science College status. Good progress has been made since the last inspection and there is now a good capacity for further success in the future.

## **VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA**

The inspection focus was on, media studies and physical education.

### **Media studies**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The wide range of courses provide for students at all levels of ability to achieve well.
- Teaching is very good; students are challenged.
- The flexible management of students' performance inspires them to take responsibility for their own learning.
- Students develop a range of practical skills, which equips them well for life outside school.
- Students use technical terms confidently and explain their work clearly.
- The limitations of space and resources are constraints to higher achievement.

### **Commentary**

138. Standards are rising consistently although examination results are sometimes below national averages. This represents good achievement overall, given the low levels of students' attainment on entry to the media studies courses. The wide range offered includes GNVQ, AVCE, AS and A levels, which provide students with exceptional opportunities to integrate practical performance with intellectual effort. All students demonstrate a sound understanding of media representations and genre, evaluating the impact on media audiences. Students in Year 12 speak enthusiastically about their projects using media language confidently in a practical context. Some of the film effects and computer-generated material they produce is outstanding because it reaches a professional standard of presentation. By Year 13, most students can discuss media values and explain the ideologies underlying texts and film representations. Students develop key skills in critical thinking and analysis as they evaluate the power of different forms of media, which influence social attitudes and affect the fundamental values of society.

139. Teaching is very good, overall because it is stimulating, consistently challenging and arises from teachers' expert knowledge of their subject. As a result, students respond enthusiastically and tackle theoretical studies thoughtfully and practical tasks productively. The teachers' flexible approach to coursework and examination assignments ensures that all students make their best efforts and take personal responsibility for their own learning. The quality of inter-dependent learning is high because it is based on co-operative working, exchanges of ideas and mutual respect. Activities are well matched to students' interests. Knowledgeable teaching assistants are on hand to support students' learning. The department is very well managed. The subject leader's approach combining theoretical discussion with practical experimentation meets the needs of the increasing number of students attracted to

the popular media studies courses well. Media studies is fast becoming a strength of the sixth form.

## **Physical education**

Overall, provision is **satisfactory**.

The teaching of AS and A-level is shared between Holy Cross and Richard Challoner Schools. Currently, six out of fifteen students (four AS and two A-level) are on roll at Holy Cross School. During the inspection one of the two A-level students was absent from school. Two lessons were observed and written work analysed.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Most students aspire to allied careers in physical education as a result of very good teaching by Holy Cross teachers.
- Teachers make excellent use of resources promoting independent learning.
- There is too little curriculum time for sport.

### **Commentary**

140. Examination results at both AS and A-level are in line with averages. This is satisfactory achievement for most students and good achievement for students with lower than average levels of prior attainment. Students are rigorously prepared for their examinations. Students' literacy skills are good and their use of information communication technology is well developed.
141. The quality of teaching is very good and occasionally exceptional. Teachers have very good subject knowledge prompting lively discussion and inquiring minds. The theoretical and practical elements are skilfully integrated resulting in good understanding. Teachers make excellent use of a wide range of resources, such as PowerPoint, to maintain interest, maximise good use of time and promote independent learning. Students work hard and contribute effectively to the work of the department by assisting with extra-curricular activities such as trampoline club. This makes a strong contribution to their personal development.
142. Leadership and management are good. However, there are too few opportunities in curriculum time for students to participate in sport, mainly due to lack of accommodation. Provision for extra-curricular activities is satisfactory. Students are given adequate guidance and support and most students aspire to allied careers in physical education such as teaching or physiotherapy.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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