

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **ST JOSEPH'S COLLEGE**

London

LEA area: Croydon

Unique reference number: 101820

Headteacher: Mr Eamon Connolly

Lead inspector: Barbara Hilton

Dates of inspection: 24 – 27 January 2005

Inspection number: 268926

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:          | Male                                   |
| Number on roll:              | 1071                                   |
| School address:              | Beulah Hill<br>Upper Norwood<br>LONDON |
| Postcode:                    | SE19 3HL                               |
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| Appropriate authority:       | Governing body                         |
| Name of chair of governors:  | Mr Brian O'Donohoe                     |
| Date of previous inspection: | 22 March 1999                          |

## **CHARACTERISTICS OF THE COLLEGE**

St Joseph's College is a voluntary aided Roman Catholic school for boys, with specialist status for mathematics and computing, at the northern end of Croydon, close to Lambeth. The college was founded by the Lasallian Brothers and is within the Catholic Diocese of Southwark. It is average in size (1071, including 151 students in the sixth form, of whom 19 are girls). The great majority of the students are Catholic, but the college selects annually a small proportion on the basis of their aptitude in information and communication technology (ICT), and they may be of any faith background. The attainment of students on entry in Year 7 is a little above average, especially in mathematics, but with few of very high or low ability. Students come from a large number of primary schools - about 45, of which 25 or so regularly send boys to the college. Their homes are mainly in Croydon and Lambeth, in about equal proportions, with a few travelling from further afield. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is broadly average, at 11.8 per cent. The school is popular and over-subscribed, and mobility is low. About half the students are white and most of those are British. Others come from a rich variety of backgrounds with significant minorities from Asian (particularly Indian and Pakistani) or Black (both Caribbean and African) backgrounds. The proportion of students coming from homes where English is spoken in addition to their heritage language is high at 27.8 per cent, but none are at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of students with special educational needs, at 16.5 per cent, is broadly average; this includes students with statements but their proportion, at 1.6 per cent, is below average. Students with higher levels of need mostly have specific learning needs (dyslexia) or social, emotional or behavioural difficulties. Links with local training providers enable about 30 students in Years 10 and 11 to attend vocational courses part-time. The sixth form is smaller than most and girls who join at this stage come from several schools, including the partner Catholic girls' school, Virgo Fidelis, and Norbury Manor, with whom the college has initiated complementary planning of sixth form courses. Small numbers of St Joseph's and Norbury Manor students attend courses across these two schools. The composition of the sixth form is similar to that of the main college, although no students have special educational needs.

The college received the School Achievement Award in 2003. In common with other schools near London, it faces difficulties recruiting teachers, which has affected staffing continuity.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

| Members of the inspection team |                     |                | Subject responsibilities                       |
|--------------------------------|---------------------|----------------|--|
| 3228                           | Barbara Hilton      | Lead inspector | Psychology                                     |
| 9561                           | Husain Akhtar       | Lay inspector  |  |
| 23588                          | Charanjit Ajitsingh | Team inspector | History  |
| 24142                          | Sylvia Argyle       | Team inspector | Art and design<br>Media studies<br>Photography |
| 8216                           | Geoffrey Binks      | Team inspector | Geography<br>Special educational needs         |
| 8104                           | Joan Child          | Team inspector | Music  |
| 11838                          | Derek Cronin        | Team inspector | Modern foreign languages<br>French             |
| 17453                          | Clive Edney         | Team inspector | Mathematics                                    |
| 32334                          | Martyn Groucutt     | Team inspector | Government and politics                        |
| 10060                          | David Gutmann       | Team inspector | Business<br>Economics                          |
| 27240                          | William Hooper      | Team inspector | Citizenship<br>Latin                           |
| 7428                           | Raymond Jardine     | Team inspector | Science<br>Chemistry                           |
| 1782                           | Andrew Lyons        | Team inspector | Design and technology<br>Work related learning |
| 20420                          | Stuart Rawcliffe    | Team inspector | Physics<br>Biology                             |
| 23030                          | Caroline Runyard    | Team inspector | Physical education                             |
| 1795                           | Joyce Sanderson     | Team inspector | English<br>English as an additional language   |
| 1578                           | Maureen Sinclair    | Team inspector | Information and communication<br>technology    |

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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

**St Joseph's College is a good school**, very well led by the headteacher. Leadership overall is good. Achievement is good in the main college and sixth form because teaching, learning and students' attitudes are good. Management is satisfactory in the main college and good in the sixth form. Value for money is good.

The college's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Results overall are above average and improving faster than nationally in Year 9, and at GCSE and in the sixth form
- Specialist college developments have built on strengths in mathematics and improved considerably provision and achievement in computing
- Results and achievement in mathematics are well above average and in art are very high
- Use of assessment data to track and improve students' progress is partial and inconsistent
- Aspects of planning and monitoring of the curriculum lack rigour so inconsistencies occur
- The ethos for learning is good and relationships very good: students like the college
- Personal guidance is very good
- Few vocational opportunities are provided

The college has made good improvement since the previous inspection. Results have improved faster than nationally. Teaching and learning are better. Development as a specialist college is enhancing mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT), as well as overall standards. While a start has been made on management issues and on matters concerning health and safety and both are satisfactory, more remains to be done. Provision in music is better.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

| Performance compared with: |                                 | all schools |      |      | similar schools |
|----------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------|------|------|-----------------|
|                            |                                 | 2002        | 2003 | 2004 | 2004            |
| Year 11                    | GCSE/GNVQ examinations          | C           | A    | B    | B               |
| Year 13                    | A/AS level and VCE examinations | E           | D    | 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 enter St Joseph's from many primary schools. Their attainment at the start of Year 7 is a little above average, with strength in mathematics, reflected in their achievement throughout. By the end of Year 9 they reach standards which are in line with the national average in English, above average in science and well above average in mathematics. Overall achievement is good. GCSE results overall are above average and reflect continued good achievement. Strength in mathematics remains: results are well above average; they are above average in English and science. Results are particularly good for a boys' school. Achievement and standards in ICT are above average in Year 9 and set to rise throughout because of greatly improved provision.

In lessons, **standards and achievement are above average overall** and very high in art. Achievement in citizenship, geography, French and physical education is satisfactory, rather than good, mainly because of inconsistencies in teaching and affected, in design and technology, by weaknesses in accommodation and resources. Students' numeracy skills are above average. Their literacy and ICT skills are average. Students with special educational needs achieve well with specialist support but generally their progress is just satisfactory because teachers do not always take enough account of their needs in lessons. Students with English as an additional language are

supported and achieve well. More able students take Latin from Year 8 and can take GCSE statistics in Year 10. Overall, their progress is satisfactory.

**Students' attitudes, attendance and behaviour are good overall; punctuality is satisfactory. Students' personal (spiritual, moral, social and cultural) development is good overall.** Relationships are very good. The values of the college reflect its Catholic foundation and support its positive and very inclusive ethos. The college is outward-looking in terms of values and beliefs.

### **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

**The quality of education is good. Teaching and learning are good overall.** Teachers generally have good command of their subjects and are dedicated to helping students to understand, and many use ICT effectively. Learning, while systematic, at times is limited because teachers' expectations are not well matched to the varied standards at which students are working. Marking and the monitoring of students' progress are satisfactory overall, because students know how well they are doing, but lack consistency. The college is making improvements in the management and use of assessment data but at present these lack rigour. **The curriculum is satisfactory overall.** Specialist status has brought considerable improvements in mathematics and ICT. However, the introduction of work-related learning (WRL) has been slow and little account taken of the 14-19 initiative to widen opportunities. In many subjects, curricular planning does not take enough account of the varied abilities of students. **Care, guidance and support for students are satisfactory overall**, with pastoral support by the Chaplain being a very good feature. Weakness in the availability of assessment information means that guidance based on monitoring progress is just satisfactory. **Partnership with parents is good. Partnership with the wider community is satisfactory.** Links with industry through specialist college programmes is a good feature but generally subjects do not cultivate links with the outside world and industry. Links with other schools and colleges are good.

### **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

**Leadership and management are good overall.** The good improvements made over recent years are due, to a large extent, to the dynamic and charismatic leadership of the headteacher. He works in effective partnership with the strong governing body which in many ways is unusually good. However, it has not ensured satisfactory provision of WRL, which is a requirement, so overall governance is good. Teamwork among senior managers is effective and has successfully established specialist college developments. Review of examination results is thorough. However, monitoring of students' progress, curricular and classroom practice is not rigorous enough so inconsistencies occur; weaknesses in accommodation and resourcing for design and technology have not been tackled.

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

Parents and students are well pleased with the college, overall. Both agree that the college is a good place to be, is well run and that students learn well in response to good teaching. A few parents, together with students, expressed concern about behaviour and bullying. Inspectors found behaviour to be good, except in a few lessons where teachers were new or lacked class management skills. Inspectors found bullying is hardly evident at all, but bad language is occasionally heard, and students are sensitive to this. Parents say homework is not demanding enough, and inspectors found this sometimes the case.

### **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

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

- Provide challenging lessons for students of all abilities, by making rigorous use of assessment information
  - Increase relevance and enrich learning by improving planning and monitoring of the curriculum
  - Increase vocational opportunities
- and, to meet statutory requirements:
- Provide a regular and coherent programme of study in WRL
  - Tackle remaining health and safety issues and improve disabled access



## OVERALL EVALUATION

**The sixth form is good.** Students achieve well in lessons and examinations. Boys' results are in line with the average for boys nationally, although in 2004 overall results were below the national average because girls' results for two-year courses dipped a little compared with 2003, when they were average. In lessons overall standards are average, and better than this in some subjects, including further mathematics, art and photography. Improvement since the last inspection is good. Sixth form numbers have grown and results have improved faster than nationally. A high proportion of students when they leave continue studying in higher or further education. Provision in ICT has improved considerably now the college has specialist status. Leadership, management and cost-effectiveness are good.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Results in individual subjects generally match or exceed those nationally because students achieve well
- Results and achievement in art and photography are well above average
- Students learn well, in response to knowledgeable teaching which is good or better in most subjects
- Vocational courses are provided in ICT but not in any other subjects
- Enrichment opportunities are limited in range
- The climate for learning and students' attitudes are good: they trust their teachers

## 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>English literature</b> provision is <b>good</b> : students learn and achieve well because teaching is good and their attitudes are mature and positive. Students' competence in literacy is average.<br><br>Provision in <b>French</b> is <b>satisfactory</b> . Students' learning and achievement are just satisfactory but good teaching is focusing on providing a sound foundation for improvement.  |
| Mathematics                          | Provision in <b>mathematics</b> is <b>good</b> ; teaching and learning are good, enabling students to achieve well. Students' competence in mathematics is above average.   |
| Science                              | Provision in both <b>chemistry</b> and <b>physics</b> is <b>good</b> . Students learn and achieve well in response to good teaching.  |
| Information communication technology | <b>ICT</b> provision is <b>good</b> . Students learn well and achieve very well because teaching is always at least good and resources are greatly improved. Students in other subjects have adequate skills for their use of ICT in lessons.   |
| Humanities                           | Provision in <b>geography</b> is <b>satisfactory</b> because teaching and learning are satisfactory. Achievement is good in examinations, as well as in lessons when students have opportunity to make their own interpretations.<br><br>In <b>government and politics</b> and <b>history</b> provision, including teaching, is <b>good</b> . Teachers use their subject knowledge well to support students' learning and achievement which are good. |
| Engineering, technology              | <b>Design and technology</b> provision is <b>satisfactory</b> . While   |

and manufacturing

students learn and achieve well in lessons in response to good teaching, other aspects of provision, including machine tools and technician support, are unsatisfactory.

| Curriculum area                         | Evaluation  |
|---|---|
| Visual and performing arts and media    | Provision in <b>art</b> is <b>very good</b> . Consistently high quality, well informed teaching encourages students to develop their art work individually. Learning and achievement are very good. |
| Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel | <b>Physical education</b> provision is <b>satisfactory</b> . Teaching, learning and achievement are satisfactory.   |
| Business                                | <b>Economics</b> provision is <b>good</b> . Students learn well because teaching is good, enabling them to develop their economic knowledge and skills and achieve well.                            |

*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'.*

### **ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT**

Advice, guidance and support are good. Year 12 students, including those new to the college, quickly adapt to the sixth form. While arrangements for monitoring students' progress do not allow rigorous, systematic evaluation, most groups are smaller than in the main college, students are known well individually and their progress is guided effectively. Relationships are very good and sixth formers are treated as adults, which they appreciate. Pastoral support for individuals by the Chaplain is very good. While few have work experience placements, students receive good advice and guidance on their futures.

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

**Leadership of the sixth form is good**, and has supported its growth and its strengths in subjects such as ICT, mathematics and art. **Management is good**. Day-to-day arrangements work well. Good relationships with a neighbouring school have supported complementary course planning: this link is well managed. Results are systematically reviewed in departments and inform college plans but monitoring of classroom practice is patchy. Governors are well informed about the sixth form, keep a close watch on relevant expenditure and take careful account of best value.

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

Students are very supportive of the sixth form and are proud of the college. They enjoy learning and are pleased with most aspects of provision including their choice of courses, teaching and their opportunities to study independently. They say they are respected, treated as adults and the school is well run. A concern they raised in response to their questionnaire was about the advice they receive on what to pursue after leaving college. Careers provision is good but arrangements for this are timed later in the year than students' views were sought, so many may not have been aware of them. Further, many teachers make little reference to the wider relevance of subjects, so students gain only limited appreciation of the implications of their choice. Students also expressed reservations about the limited range of extra-curricular activities provided, and inspectors share this view.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS**

### **STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS**

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

Overall, achievement, standards and results are above average by the end of Year 9 and at GCSE. Students, including those new to the college, continue to achieve well in the sixth form in which standards are broadly average. Recent sixth form results reflect well on students' performance at GCSE.

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

- Results at the end of Year 9, GCSE and in the sixth form are improving faster than nationally
- In mathematics results and achievement are well above average, and in art are very high
- Achievement in work-related learning is unsatisfactory overall
- Effective use is made of challenging targets to raise results
- Students of minority groups achieve as well as others and some achieve very well in examinations

#### **Commentary**

1. Results in Year 9 National Curriculum tests in 2004 were well above average in mathematics, above average in science and average in English. Students' attainment on entry in Year 7 is a little above average, especially in mathematics. Strength in mathematics is reflected in students' achievement through the college. Achievement overall in core subjects (English, mathematics and science) by the end of Year 9 is good, and particularly good for a boys' school, being very good in mathematics and good in English. Achievement is satisfactory in science because students' understanding of scientific investigation lags behind that of more theoretical aspects of their work.
2. Achievement is also good in information and communication technology (ICT): standards are above average by the end of Year 9. Achievement and standards in other subjects are in line with or above expectations, except in geography, in which progress has been affected by staff changes and is slow at first and in art, in which students excel to reach well above average standards.
3. General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) results are above the overall national average and well above the average for boys. They reflect well on the achievement of all students, including those with special educational needs and those who speak English in addition to their home language. Mathematics results are strongest among the core subjects, being well above average, and more able students who take statistics in Year 10 achieve very high results. Results in science and English are above average and in English they are particularly good for boys. In 2004 English literature results dropped to average, but in recent years they also have been above average. ICT results in 2004 were a little better than average and they are set to improve markedly because students taking the GCSE examination in 2005 and onwards are benefiting from much better provision now computing is a specialism of the college.
4. Achievement in art continues to be excellent across Years 10 and 11, enabling students to gain very high GCSE results both in art and design and in photography. Recent results at GCSE have been well above average in music and business studies, above average in French and matched the national averages in geography and Latin. Standards and achievement in these subjects are in line with results, except in Latin, in which achievement is good, enabling students to reach GCSE standards in just four years; and in music, in which students, while achieving well, are still catching up, following staff changes. Achievement in history lessons is also good, although recent results have been a little below the national

average and the average for the college. Results in physical education have fluctuated in the last two years, from a little above average to well below; while achievement is satisfactory in lessons not enough emphasis is placed on some aspects, notably evaluation, and how to improve. Results in design and technology have been above average and better than lessons indicate; recent staff changes and weaknesses in accommodation affect standards and achievement in lessons which, overall, are just average. No examinations are taken in citizenship; in this, achievement and standards are about average. Only in work-related learning (WRL) is overall achievement unsatisfactory because there are not enough links with the world of work and applications of learning across the curriculum.

5. Students' numeracy skills are above average, and help them to cope with handling numbers and mathematical ideas in other subjects. Students' ICT skills are above average in ICT lessons but not across the curriculum because they do not have enough varied opportunities to apply them: overall standards are average. Their literacy skills are about average. While they listen well and more able students respond well in class discussions, their written work is of uneven quality and some do not read widely enough.
6. The literacy skills of students who speak English as an additional language are carefully identified at an early stage. Students are supported well and progress rapidly as their reading and writing improve. Students with special educational needs achieve satisfactorily, overall. They succeed particularly well in creative subjects, art and music, and in some games lessons. Progress is often good in individual teaching and small groups in English, mathematics and science. Achievement is unsatisfactory for some in geography and French where their needs are not provided for. Extra subjects - Latin in Year 8 and statistics in Year 10 - provide opportunity for more able students. Generally, however, more able students achieve in line with others in their lessons because no particular account is taken of their needs in planning lessons. Shortcomings and inconsistencies, where they occur, indicate weaknesses in the monitoring of teaching and the curriculum.
7. Results at the end of Year 9 and at GCSE are improving more quickly than those nationally. While GCSE results in 2004 were not quite as good as in 2003, the college has maintained its record of enabling virtually all students to gain at least one subject at GCSE, and the general pattern is of increased success by students at higher grades. Results are considerably better than the average in Croydon. Since the last inspection strengths in mathematics and art have been maintained and standards in ICT and music much improved. Students of minority groups achieve at least as well as the average for the college. This is true of non-Catholics and also those of ethnic minority backgrounds. In 2004, for example, Indian and Pakistani students achieved well by the end of Year 9, and black African students achieved particularly well both by the end of Year 9 and at GCSE. Results are analysed rigorously, reviewed carefully and challenging targets used effectively to raise standards further.

### **Key Stage 3**

#### ***Standards in national tests at the end of Year 9 – average point scores in 2004***

| Standards in: | School results | National results |
|---------------|----------------|------------------|
| English       | 33.8 (34.8)    | N/A (33.4)       |
| mathematics   | 39.3 (39.5)    | N/A (35.4)       |
| science       | 34.8 (35.0)    | N/A (33.6)       |

*There were 181 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year*

## Key Stage 4

### Standards in GCSE/GNVQ examinations at the end of Year 11 in 2004

|   | School results | National results |
|---|----------------|------------------|
| Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-C grades  | 56 (63)        | 52 (52)          |
| Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-G grades  | 93 (95)        | 89 (88)          |
| Percentage of students gaining 1 or more A*-G grades  | 98 (99)        | 96 (96)          |
| Average point score per student (best eight subjects) | 37.9 (38.8)    | 34.9 (34.7)      |

*There were 165 students in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

#### Sixth form

8. Achievement across the sixth form is good. Results have improved markedly in recent years and are much better than at the previous inspection. In 2004 while overall results were below those nationally, boys' results matched those of boys nationally at both AS (Advanced Supplementary) and A2 (Advanced) levels of the General Certificate of Education (GCE). Girls' results at AS level in 2004 were as good as girls' nationally, but they slipped below the average for girls at A2 level. However, the number of girls taking examinations is fairly small and their results fluctuate; in 2003 their A2 level results matched the national average. The GCSE results of students who took sixth form examinations in 2004, including those who joined the sixth form from other schools, were just average. Comparison of students' final results with their GCSE performance shows above average achievement. In line with college policy, students finalise their AS level grades when they complete their sixth form studies, so subject results included later in this report are not fully representative of performance of teaching groups in 2003-2004.
9. Achievement in lessons is generally good. While overall standards are average they are better than this in some subjects. Able mathematicians continue to achieve highly in further mathematics (results in 2004 were very high) although A2 level results in mathematics are average. Success in art and photography continues into the sixth form: results in both are well above the national averages. In 2004 results at AS level in psychology were well above average and in a lesson sampled at the inspection achievement was good. In most other subjects, including English literature, results have been in line with or above average and at the inspection achievement and standards were consistent with this. However, the well above average results obtained in 2004 for A2 level sport and physical education were not reflected in work seen, which was broadly average. Standards and achievement in economics (average and above average, respectively) are better than recent results (below average) indicate.
10. Students are competent in literacy, they listen effectively and are articulate. Their mathematics skills are above average and support their learning well. In lessons, use of ICT is just satisfactory but outside of lessons students make effective use of technology for independent learning.
11. As in the main college, effective use is made of challenging targets to raise results. The subjects in which students are most successful in the sixth form are further mathematics, art, photography and government and politics, which is greatly improved since the last inspection. The subjects in which students have been least successful are chemistry and biology. Chemistry was inspected in detail and found to be good: students were achieving well and

reaching above average standards in lessons. Review of students' progress has been strengthened to ensure they can cope with course demands. Biology, which was sampled, was more mixed, but progress in lessons was satisfactory, overall. Analysis shows that the overall achievement of girls matches that of boys and no differences are apparent among students of different ethnic backgrounds. About 80 per cent of students when they leave continue their studies in higher or further education.

## Sixth form

### **Standards in GCE A/AS level and VCE examinations at the end of Year 13 in 2004**

|  | School results | National results |
|--|----------------|------------------|
| Percentage of entries gaining A-E grades | 95.9 (83.9)    | 92.3 (92.3)      |
| Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades | 35.9 (27.2)    | 36.2 (35.6)      |
| Average point score per student          | 222.7 (196.6)  | 265.2 (258.2)    |

*There were 62 students (52 boys and 10 girls) in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year*

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

Good. Students' attitudes are good. Behaviour is good in the main school and very good in the sixth form. Overall, students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Students' attendance is good, but punctuality is just satisfactory.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Students' relationships with one another and adults are very good
- Students enjoy coming to college and are enthusiastic about what it offers
- Students' personal development is supported very effectively by the Chaplain
- The college is a well-ordered and harmonious community
- In a few lessons behaviour is unsatisfactory: this is linked to weaknesses in teaching
- The college is outward-looking in terms of values and beliefs
- Opportunities for sixth formers to contribute to college life are not well developed

### **Commentary**

12. Students' attitudes, values and personal development are good overall, as at the previous inspection, and for similar reasons. Students are interested in what the college has to offer and their interest is particularly high in mathematics and art, cultivated by very effective teaching. Students also enjoy innovative computing courses. They are enterprising about learning and carry out research, using books, CD-ROMs, the Internet, and other sources of information. They are very positive about the college, and involve themselves fully in most lessons. Students with special educational needs and those learning English as an additional language work productively, and often enthusiastically when given individual help. However, students' behaviour is unsatisfactory in a small minority of lessons, as seen in French, geography and design and technology. This was because classes were not managed effectively and students took the opportunity to behave inappropriately. In some physical education sessions inspectors noted clearly audible bad language from students which went unchecked by the teacher. Students feel that they are generally well taught and that teachers are supportive and helpful. The rules are clear and well understood so that behaviour around the college is generally good, although the cramped conditions in the canteen and some corridors occasionally result in some pushing and scuffles.
13. The anti-bullying policy is well established, and students report that they are happy to talk to staff about any instances of physical bullying. All students who talked to the inspection team said that there was so little bullying that there was no real problem. There is some bad

language to which students are sensitive. However, students were also quite clear that the college is very harmonious and that students of all backgrounds are respected and fully involved in every part of college life, and the inspection confirms this.

14. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are supported effectively. Their spiritual growth is fostered through specific opportunities, for example, retreats at a De La Salle centre, and the religious life of the college. Relatively few opportunities are provided for reflection in subjects, except in art and music. Students' social and moral development is cultivated well, through the supportive environment in the lower school (Years 7 and 8), trips abroad and the college's high expectations about conduct. The Chaplain's support for students' personal development and dealing with behaviour-related incidents is very effective. He is trusted, and his efforts are appreciated by them. Students develop their ability to relate to others and take on responsibilities within the college community. They are very active in charitable work and arrange a wide variety of fund-raising activities. Older students spend time supporting younger ones in work and leisure activities, such as arranging and refereeing football tournaments.
15. Students are very well prepared for life in a diverse society. The college is outward-looking in terms of values and beliefs. Students respect other cultural backgrounds, traditions and faiths, alongside their own. This capacity is cultivated strongly through the positive ethos of the college, its admissions policy and overseas links developed by the De La Salle Brothers. Through lessons in art, music, English and occasional drama productions students develop appreciation of the arts. Cultural development is not a strong feature in other subjects.

### **Sixth form**

16. Students' personal development is good, supported by very good relationships, the positive ethos of the college, and their own good attitudes to learning. Behaviour is very good. Students of all backgrounds and those who join the college in the sixth form, including girls, participate well in lessons. Students are self-confident, respond well to the variety of activities provided in lessons and are willing to state their views. In a few lessons activities lacked challenge, the pace was slow and students became passive. However, this is not generally the case and when provided with challenging tasks which interest them they are highly motivated and work hard as observed, for example, in mathematics and art.
17. Structured arrangements for supporting students' personal development include the religious life of the college, personal and social education lessons and the college council. Students have a satisfactory range of opportunities to take responsibility in the sixth form and in the college as a whole. As headboy, prefects and in games they support each other and younger students. However, opportunities for sixth formers to contribute to the whole college community are not well developed: the sixth form is fairly self-contained both in its suite of rooms and in the life of the college. Service to the wider community is fostered through generous support for charities and visits to a nearby hospice. Students appreciate the diversity and richness of the college community, respect the views and traditions of others and are sensitive and responsive to their needs.
18. Students are very supportive of the college and what it provides. They enjoy the sixth form. Most find the teaching challenging and teachers helpful and say the college is well run. Nearly all feel that their choice of courses suits their abilities, and in discussion explain that they made up their own mind about their subjects and did not rely on the help of others. However, substantial numbers do not feel there is a good range of extra-curricular activities, and inspectors agree. Many students also say that they do not have well-informed advice about what to do after leaving college. Inspectors found careers provision to be good but arrangements for this are timed later in the college year than students' views were sought, so many may not have been aware of them. Further, most teachers make little reference to applications and the wider relevance of subjects, so students gain only limited appreciation of the implications of their choice.



## Attendance

### Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

| Authorised absence |     | Unauthorised absence |     |
|--------------------|-----|----------------------|-----|
| School data        | 5.6 | School data          | 0.1 |
| National data      | 6.9 | National data        | 1.1 |

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

19. Attendance is good, as at the last inspection. Most students, including the sixth formers, attend regularly because of their good attitudes to learning, the college's high expectations and their families who are supportive. Many recorded absences derive from a small number of students, because of specific circumstances, mostly due to illness. While some arrive very early at the start of the day, because this suits their travel arrangements, overall punctuality is only satisfactory. This does not cause any major disruptions in learning and is less marked than at the last inspection. However, the site is large. Students have various distances to travel between lessons, which can lead to a slow start to teaching.

## Exclusions

Fixed term and permanent exclusions (which have both decreased since the previous inspection) are about average in number for a college of this size: these sanctions are applied fairly when students' challenging behaviour or misdeeds become unacceptable.

### Ethnic background of students

### Exclusions in the last school year

| Categories used in the Annual School Census         | No of students on roll | Number of fixed period exclusions | Number of permanent exclusions |
|---|------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| White – British                                     | 410                    | 22                                | 2                              |
| White – Irish                                       | 40                     | 1                                 | 0                              |
| White – any other White background                  | 55                     | 3                                 | 0                              |
| Mixed – White and Black Caribbean                   | 21                     | 2                                 | 0                              |
| Mixed – White and Black African                     | 6                      | 0                                 | 0                              |
| Mixed – White and Asian                             | 19                     | 0                                 | 0                              |
| Mixed – any other mixed background                  | 29                     | 0                                 | 0                              |
| Asian or Asian British – Indian                     | 119                    | 1                                 | 0                              |
| Asian or Asian British – Pakistani                  | 58                     | 1                                 | 0                              |
| Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi                | 5                      | 0                                 | 0                              |
| Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background | 32                     | 0                                 | 0                              |
| Black or Black British – Caribbean                  | 79                     | 8                                 | 0                              |
| Black or Black British – African                    | 137                    | 9                                 | 0                              |
| Black or Black British – any other Black background | 22                     | 0                                 | 0                              |

|                          |    |   |   |
|--------------------------|----|---|---|
| Chinese                  | 6  | 0 | 0 |
| Any other ethnic group   | 50 | 1 | 0 |
| No ethnic group recorded | 20 | 5 | 0 |

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

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE COLLEGE

The quality of education provided is good because teaching and learning are good overall at each stage. The curriculum is satisfactory in the main college and in the sixth form. Care, guidance and support are satisfactory, with personal guidance being a very good feature. Partnership with parents and with other schools and colleges is good, and with the wider community satisfactory.

### Teaching and learning

Overall, teaching and learning are good both in the main college and the sixth form. Marking and assessment are satisfactory overall.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers are dedicated and most use their good subject knowledge effectively
- Teaching varies in effectiveness: too frequently activities match the general level of the class but are not appropriately challenging for the most able or those who need extra support
- Teaching and learning are excellent in art
- Relationships are very good, fostering a supportive climate for learning
- Subject teachers receive little guidance on planning for students who need more help, or challenge
- Students learn systematically and contribute well in discussions
- Not enough use is made of homework to extend learning

### Commentary

20. Teaching and learning are good overall, consistently good in mathematics, ICT and Latin, and excellent in art. Very good features bring strengths to good provision in business studies and music. In other subjects, including English and science teaching and learning vary in quality, dependent upon the teacher, but examples of good teaching were seen throughout. A few lessons were unsatisfactory: these were mostly with younger students who misbehaved. Where there have been staff changes and temporary teachers provision is uneven, sometimes because expectations of work and behaviour are too low, as in French. However, in music, new teachers are setting challenging work and capturing the enthusiasm of students who learn effectively.
21. Teachers are dedicated and their subject knowledge and very good relationships with students are strengths which students appreciate. In art, for example, the fairly large team includes several professional artists whose expertise and high expectations enable students to achieve excellently in a range of media, including photography. Similarly in mathematics and ICT teachers' subject knowledge is effectively used to plan interesting and challenging activities enabling students to learn well. In science, teachers' good subject knowledge enables them to give very clear explanations of key concepts. However, in some lessons in geography and history knowledgeable teachers tended to talk far too long. Lessons became didactic and students' motivation was reduced. Teachers are considerate of students, enabling them to develop self-confidence and share their ideas, and thus students contribute to each other's learning. In English, when encouraged with well focused questions, students learn to develop and organise their ideas of books they are reading.

22. In subjects where achievement is a strength, expectations are consistently high for students of all abilities. The grouping of students by ability, where it occurs, assists teachers in planning appropriate work. While some teachers adapt work to extend the more able and help those who are having difficulty to learn in small steps, this is a shortcoming in too many lessons. For example, more able Year 8 students were allowed to coast in lessons on formal writing in English, when learning about digestion in science and Brazil in geography. In French, too frequently, all students do the same work, with no account taken of prior attainment. The creation of small groups for lower attaining students in English, mathematics and ICT is effective in raising their standards. Students with special educational needs are supported well by specialist teachers and teaching assistants, but too often subject teachers do not take enough account of their needs and are not guided in doing so by teachers who link with the learning support team. Partnership planning by the language support and subject teachers effectively assists the progress of students learning English as an additional language.
23. Effective use of the Key Stage 3 strategy, with clear learning objectives, starter activities, and achievement summarised at the end, is a regular feature in many lessons in English, mathematics and science and promotes good progress, but is not used consistently throughout. Planning is a strength in design and technology but is less structured in geography and in some history lessons activities lack variety. In science there is not enough emphasis on students' planning and carrying out their own investigations. While homework was set during the inspection, frequently activities were undemanding, requiring little time. Parents comment on this shortcoming. Few schemes of work include homework plans to build effectively on learning in lessons.
24. Students are willing learners and many are keen. They develop good knowledge and understanding and when given suitable opportunities, as in art and music, develop their creativity and produce high quality work. They use their time sensibly in lessons and most will continue in their own time, when suitably directed. Their literacy skills are adequate to support their learning but many need reminding about the quality and consistency of their writing. Their numeracy skills are good and in subjects which use mathematical concepts teachers help students to apply them effectively. In lessons use of ICT is improving teaching in many subjects, for example, through interactive white boards and research, but direct use by students is more limited and in art there is none, as computers are not yet provided. However, in music, the teachers' deft use of software, coupled with very good musical understanding, is enabling students to make rapid gains in composition. In some design and technology lessons conditions are cramped and tools insufficient, so students do not learn and make the progress expected in practicals.
25. Students know how well they are doing because they familiarise themselves with the systems teachers use in marking and reports to parents provide half-yearly milestones. Students know their targets for improvement. Evaluation is a regular feature in art lessons and helps students to understand how to improve, but not enough emphasis is placed on this in physical education. Overall, arrangements are satisfactory, with greater consistency in marking in Years 10 and 11 than in earlier years. The college is at the stage of introducing software to record and manage assessment information. This will bring it in line with practice in many other schools. At present, while all teachers have access to data on students' attainment on entry and their results in formal tests, analysis is partial, for example, covering Years 7 and 8, or subjects, such as mathematics.
26. Teaching is considerably better than at the last inspection. The proportion of good and better lessons has increased from 50 to 70 per cent and the amount of teaching which is less than satisfactory has decreased from 20 to six per cent. The overall good teaching is leading to good achievement. One characteristic remains: the variability of teaching within several departments and across the college. This indicates lack of consistent monitoring and support for teaching. Budget cuts in recent years have reduced in-service training opportunities which have tended to focus on specialist college subjects. However, within departments and among teachers there are real strengths which deserve to be known more widely.

## Sixth form

27. Teaching and learning in the sixth form are good. Generally teachers make effective use of their subject expertise, which is a strength, and provide challenging lessons, enabling students to learn effectively. Subject knowledge is a particular strength in mathematics, chemistry, physics and art and is effectively used to ask thoughtful questions in many subjects, as in English. The best lessons are very well planned so that main points are emphasised, and students make very good progress, as when learning about critical success factors in ICT, key features of set works in music and production in media studies, which is provided at another local school for students of St Joseph's. Teachers' individual attention enables students to build on their previous learning and develop creative approaches as in photography, and the design of a programmable car, in design and technology. Activities in a few lessons tended to lack variety; for example, too much note-taking was seen in sports studies.
28. Students' learning progresses well. They build steadily on their knowledge and understanding. Relationships are very good. Students new to the sixth form, including girls, participate fully in lessons and ask if they do not understand. The more able question thoughtfully and raise interesting ethical and moral issues. Most are enthusiastic about learning but they slip into working at a leisurely pace if not engaged in relevant activities - as sometimes observed in large AS level classes (with 20 or more students), where some completed tasks early. Overall, their analytical skills develop well, and in subjects such as geography and history they are perceptive in interpreting information. Marking and assessment are satisfactory. Students know how well they are doing and, especially in the small A2 level classes, teachers monitor their progress closely. Homework is satisfactory. It is regularly set in most subjects, but sometimes not extensive.

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 165 lessons

| Excellent | Very good | Good     | Satisfactory | Unsatisfactory | Poor   | Very Poor |
|-----------|-----------|----------|--------------|----------------|--------|-----------|
| 10 (6%)   | 41 (25%)  | 64 (39%) | 40 (24%)     | 8 (5%)         | 2 (1%) | 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.*

## The curriculum

The curriculum is satisfactory with strengths in mathematics and ICT. Staffing, accommodation and learning resources are satisfactory.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- As a specialist college strengths in mathematics have been extended and ICT provision much improved, including the availability of computers
- Schemes of work are uneven in quality and too many do not take enough account of the range of students' abilities
- National Curriculum requirements are met, except for the provision of work-related learning
- Personal and social education is of good quality and enhanced through religious education
- Response to the national strategy for broadening the 14-19 curriculum has been slow
- Sixth form choice is enhanced through complementary planning with a local girls' school but few vocational courses are provided
- Enrichment opportunities are limited, especially in the sixth form
- Design and technology resourcing and accommodation are unsatisfactory and limit students' progress
- Accommodation is adequate overall but aspects of its maintenance are unsatisfactory and detract from the business-like ethos

## Commentary

29. The curriculum caters effectively for the abilities of students: they achieve well at GCSE. Since the last inspection, provision in ICT has much improved and requirements are now met. All students have ICT lessons and in Years 10 and 11 vocational courses are provided. Increasing use is made of technology across the curriculum. Provision in mathematics has been strengthened, and more able students can take GCSE statistics in Year 10, followed by GCSE mathematics in Year 11. Improvement in these specialist college subjects has been good. Provision in music has also improved and now meets requirements. Progress in other initiatives has been limited, however, notably in response to the Government's initiatives to broaden the 14 to 19 curriculum and provide WRL, in which requirements are not met. Although some students in Years 10 and 11 attend vocational courses part-time elsewhere, reference to applications of learning has not been developed in most subjects so for the great majority of students understanding has not been enriched through knowledge of the world of work, and this is not satisfactory.
30. A satisfactory range of subjects is provided. More able students start Latin in Year 8 and this can be continued up to GCSE. However, only one modern foreign language is provided - French - and very few students take an examination in their home language. The time for Latin in Years 8 and 9 is taken from the allocation for French (in top sets) which tends to limit learning for more able students in French. Arts opportunities are represented by art, photography (in Years 10 and 11) and music. While these are good, drama is not separately provided, although elements are included in English. Virtually all students take double award science at GCSE. In Year 10, photography and business studies extend students' choice of subjects and the success rate is high in both.
31. A weakness is the unevenness of planning in schemes of work. A few subjects include detailed planning for students of all abilities, as in mathematics and ICT. However, this is not general and too often in lessons a few students coast or waste time because work is not appropriately challenging. Similarly, homework is identified in plans for a few subjects, as in design and technology, but not generally. In many schemes of work reference is made to policies for literacy, numeracy and ICT, but specific applications are not identified. Students with special educational needs, and those needing language support because they speak English as an additional language, have access to the full curriculum. A few receive intensive help and this is planned to fit in with their timetables. Individual support, where provided, is of good quality.
32. Provision for personal and social education is good. Required topics of health, sex and drugs education are covered in lessons, and augmented in religious education, science and physical education. Preparation for the next stage of education is good. Careers education is well organised and students have work experience in Year 10.
33. A satisfactory range of extra-curricular opportunities is provided. It is best in the lower school where students have access to computers and homework rooms from very early in the morning. The best direct support for students' learning is in mathematics and art - in which students achieve best. A number of well-focused activities and visits add depth to learning. For example, in art visits are made to places as far away as New York and Barcelona, as well as to exhibitions in the local area. Good opportunities have been initiated in music and drama productions are regularly arranged. Only limited opportunities are provided in most other subjects, including design and technology and science, and students comment on this. A good range of fixtures is arranged in sport but few clubs are provided for recreational games. The extra-curricular programme is not well advertised to parents and students, and students' attendance is not regularly monitored. Learning and language support staff arrange extra activities for students who need help, for example, the bilingual reading club. Except in art, music and sports little enrichment is planned for the more able.

## Sixth form

34. A satisfactory range of subjects is provided. Progression is encouraged by continuation of all subjects started in the main college, except Latin and business studies, with the addition of new subjects - economics and government and politics - which extend students' choice. Developments in ICT include vocational courses but no other vocational courses are provided, and this is an area for improvement. Local discussions at headteacher level have been initiated by the Learning Skills Council to foster vocational opportunities through collaboration among specialist schools. Already a few students benefit by attending media studies at a neighbouring girls' school, and their students join photography classes at St Joseph's. In addition to their examination subjects students attend personal and social education classes. This programme is effective and covers expected topics. Games is optional on Wednesday afternoon and participation limited. General studies and key skills are not provided.
35. Enrichment opportunities are limited and fewer than in most sixth forms. No specific programme is planned: activities are occasional and *ad hoc*. Very little work experience is provided and few links exist with local businesses. The best opportunities are in art and mathematics. Year 12 (and younger students) compete successfully in the "Hans Woydr" mathematics tournament. The geography residential field trip has just been re-established and is popular. Year 13 biologists make day visits to Epping for environmental studies. Regular sporting fixtures are arranged for teams but few additional opportunities are provided to meet the interests of girls.

### **Staffing, accommodation and resources**

36. The college has an adequate number of suitably qualified staff for the curriculum provided, though it has difficulty in recruitment. Students benefit from the expertise teachers provide, as in art, mathematics, ICT, Latin and music. The calibre of support teachers and assistants and other non-teaching staff is generally high. Use of the community as a resource to enrich students' learning experiences is under-developed. The college is generally well resourced. It is now well equipped with computers and related hardware and software and students have ready access to these. This is a marked improvement since the previous inspection. Interactive white boards enhance teaching effectively in many subjects. ICT equipment is planned, but not yet available, in art. The library is well-stocked and very welcoming environment.
37. Accommodation presents a mixed picture but is satisfactory overall. The site is big and buildings vary in age from historic (the main block) to very recent (parts of ICT). The fabric and cleanliness are neglected in parts, as in the small rooms used by the sixth form and stair wells leading to art. Most specialist rooms support learning effectively, as in art, science and ICT. Physical education benefits from good quality playing fields and a swimming pool. Music accommodation is used to full capacity. Two aspects of accommodation are weak. Teaching rooms are too dispersed in some subjects, as in English, which results in inefficient use of resources and detracts from subject ethos. Some rooms are overcrowded and not resourced adequately for the National Curriculum, as in some English and geography rooms, which are old-fashioned in furnishings and fittings, and in design and technology where accommodation is overcrowded and poor.

### **Care, guidance and support**

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory overall; personal guidance is very good.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Induction procedures are thorough and help students to settle quickly in Year 7
- Students benefit from very good personal guidance, significantly enhanced by the contribution of the Chaplain
- Guidance for students with learning or language needs is good
- The college has initiated measures to rectify the inconsistent tracking of academic progress

## **Commentary**

38. Pastoral systems provide a very good level of personal support and guidance. Heads of year know students well, including those in Year 7, because information is gathered early. The head of lower school provides effective liaison with feeder schools, which is well supported by the mathematics and ICT departments. Students settle well when they arrive in Year 7, and enjoy the benefits of having their own base and lots of activities. Students value the advice and counselling provided by the Chaplain, who is readily available. Students have positive views on the college.
39. Guidance through the monitoring of academic progress is barely satisfactory. Students know their targets for improvement in subjects. Most departments have used ICT increasingly to create databases to monitor the achievement of students, or to detect underachievement. However, form tutors and most heads of year have relied on reports to parents to gather this information together, so tracking achievement and identifying where support is necessary has been difficult, especially as reports are inconsistent in the information they provide. The college has now prioritised the need to track achievement across subjects more systematically, with the appointment of a data manager. Guidance for students with special educational needs and those at an early stage of learning English is better than that generally and is good. Parents commented on this at their meeting. Reviews of students' progress are frequent for those at an early stage of learning English and enable effective planning, so that students move on in their learning. Annual reviews for students with statements of special educational needs are carried out effectively and helpfully engage key people, including parents, in productive discussion.
40. Guidance on further study and career opportunities is good. Students receive detailed guidance on the courses they can choose to follow in Year 10 and in the sixth form. Year 10 students gain an insight into the world of work through their work experience placements. Careers guidance is included in the personal and social education programme from Year 7. In Years 10 and 11, the Connexions service provides training for interviews. The college makes good use of visiting speakers to support learning about careers and social issues such as drug abuse.
41. Students are well looked after by adults, including the highly respected Chaplain, who are sensitive to their personal needs. The college takes satisfactory steps to ensure students' health and safety. Catering arrangements are adequate, but little particular emphasis is placed on healthy eating. Breakfast is available for students who arrive early. Arrangements in place for first aid and medical support are effective. Assessment of risks is satisfactory, but in this regard a number of health and safety issues have been identified to the college. The child protection officers are knowledgeable and the level of awareness among senior staff is high. Others are regularly briefed about relevant issues, although there has not been any recent formal training for all staff. The college has appropriate links with the support agencies. Students are carefully guided on matters relating to their well-being through the curriculum, as in personal and social education, and by visiting specialists such as a police officer who speaks to students about a number of welfare-related matters. Students feel valued and well cared for but, apart from the developing college council, there are not many planned opportunities to gauge students' views or for them to influence decision-making.
42. Provision for care, guidance and support remains satisfactory overall, as at the last inspection. Improved features include support by form tutors, especially in the lower school, and links with primary schools. While health and safety issues raised at the last inspection have been resolved, others have been identified. The major area for development remains the use of monitoring information in guiding students' progress, which the college is in the process of tackling.

## **Sixth form**

43. Care, guidance and support are good, overall, and better than in the main college because groups are smaller so students are well known individually. Most students are grouped with form tutors who teach one of their subjects. Completion of units of work, predicted grades

and half-yearly reports assist students in knowing how they are progressing. However, more frequent review of progress depends on individual subject teachers; arrangements are not formalised.

44. The two-day induction at the start of the sixth form enables students to settle into their classes and appreciate aspects of the college, including the Chaplaincy which, as in the main college, is trusted and appreciated. However, the programme is not developed to include study skills or team building, which are covered in personal and social education lessons. Careers guidance is good but few have work experience placements. Students feel well supported and find the sixth form friendly - like one large family, they say. Few drop out. Students new to the sixth form, including girls, are happily integrated into the community. Good relations between St Joseph's and the neighbouring girls' school enables effective transfer of monitoring information and support for the students who study at both sites. Students have found it easy to adjust to lessons at partner schools. The views of students are sought through the college council and are taken seriously. Apart from this there are few systematic opportunities for them to influence planning in the college.

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

The college has good links with parents, who are pleased with most aspects of its work. Links with the community are satisfactory. The college has good links with other schools and colleges.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Positive links with parents support students' learning
- Links with other schools and colleges extend and enrich teaching and learning
- Links with industry and the business community provide only limited enrichment in subjects
- Parents appreciate college provision and the progress made by their sons and daughters

### **Commentary**

45. The college provides satisfactory information for parents. They are kept informed through letters, information evenings, which are well attended, and Chaplaincy interviews. The lower school is welcoming and communicates well with parents, which they appreciate. The college prospectus and the governors' annual reports are informative. The prospectus is well presented but it does not inform parents of their right to withdraw their children from the religious and sex education. Students' annual progress reports are informative but inconsistent across subjects, particularly in identifying areas for development and what parents can do to raise their children's achievement. Targets for improvement are often too general.
46. Links with parents are effective, as at the last inspection. They readily support religious events and the parent-teacher association raises substantial funds, for example, for ICT equipment. They support students' learning through their attendance at parents' evenings. The college maintains good contact with the parents of students with special educational needs. Most participate well in annual reviews of statements. Parents co-operate well with the pastoral staff and give practical assistance on college trips and through fund-raising. The college has the confidence of all communities.
47. Links with other schools and colleges enrich the curriculum for younger and older students, support smooth transition to and from the college and provide staff with opportunities to share and develop good practice. Liaison with primary schools by the head of lower school is good



and strengthened by developments in mathematics and ICT. Links with further education colleges are developing through vocational initiatives. Good relationships are maintained with providers of initial teacher training and teaching in art is enriched by ideas new teachers bring. The college is significantly involved in raising funds for charities and helps the wider community in this way. The swimming pool has been a well-used resource. The college provides ICT evening classes for adults, which some parents attend. Some links with industry have been fostered through ICT developments but in other subjects links with the world outside college, including industry, are under-developed, limiting students' learning experiences.

48. Parents are well pleased with the college, overall. Through their questionnaire, they say their children like the college and are making good progress in response to good teaching. They agree strongly that the college is well led, that staff treat children fairly and encourage their sons and daughters to become mature and independent. A small minority mentioned concern about behaviour and bullying. Inspectors found behaviour to be good, except in a few lessons where teachers were new or lacked class management skills. Physical bullying is hardly evident in the college and students confirm this. Some bad language is used, however. Discussion at their meeting confirmed parents' generally good views. A few parents also mentioned concerns about testing during induction arrangements for Year 7, lack of support for reading and the narrow range of extra-curricular activities. The college includes testing at an early stage so there is no delay in grouping students, who settle quickly when they start. Any lack of support for reading has been due to staff turnover. Provision in English was found to be good by inspectors but the emphasis placed on literacy (including reading) across the curriculum is inconsistent. Inspectors broadly agree with parents' views on extra-curricular activities, but also found opportunities are not well publicised.

### **Sixth form**

49. The helpful partnership with parents continues to support students' work as they study in the sixth form. Parents are kept well informed about the progress of their sons and daughters through tutor reviews and consultation meetings. The sixth form has developed a friendly and supportive ethos of its own, which is appreciated by students.
50. As in the main college, students' development and the curriculum are only satisfactorily supported by the world beyond the college. Useful links with businesses support vocational courses in ICT, but links with business and industry are limited in other subjects so students have little experience of applications of their learning. Collaboration with a nearby girls' school has led to complementary planning of sixth form courses. At the time of the inspection joint planning with other local specialist schools had been initiated. While only a few students benefit from joint arrangements at present, potential benefit is great.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

Leadership, which by the headteacher is very good and overall is good, has instigated good improvement since the previous inspection. Management is satisfactory in the main college and good in the sixth form. Governance and financial management are good.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Leadership is strengthened through commitment to Catholic values and supporting others
- The budget is well managed in spite of heavy financial pressures
- Planning for improvement is systematic and founded on thorough review of results and overall performance
- Monitoring of the students' progress across all years, curriculum and classroom practice is not rigorous enough so inconsistencies occur
- Staff development opportunities have been restricted in recent years
- Governors know the college well and are effective critical friends



## Commentary

51. Governors are strongly committed to the college. They draw on a variety of professional backgrounds, collectively have much experience of the college and are demanding of it. They are very well aware of strengths and weaknesses in the main college and the sixth form and work co-operatively with senior managers to adapt and improve provision. They have managed a tight budget skilfully and take best value into account in purchases as varied as, for example, a new boiler, computers and musical instruments. Governors' own arrangements are efficient and they are suitably challenging of them. In many ways governors are unusually good. However, in two areas statutory requirements are not met: WRL and disabled access to all buildings. Governors are informed of progress on WRL and anticipate further developments over the next year. Access for the disabled is possible in some areas but the buildings are complex and diverse; those who have temporary problems are assisted in moving around the site. Overall, therefore, governance is good.
52. The leadership of the headteacher is very good: highly principled, founded on universal Christian values, and charismatic. This is reflected in the inclusive and positive ethos of the college. Since his appointment nine years ago, standards and the popularity of the college have improved markedly, while it continues to serve local communities. He is very well regarded by parents and students who respect the improvements he has made and find him approachable. He is ably supported by deputies who lead on improvement planning for the college and other senior staff, among whom teamwork is effective. Plans for improvement are well focused and apt. General priorities, reflected across all subjects, are for improvement in teaching and learning, and management. Leadership in subjects and aspects of the college's work, while good overall, is mixed. The drive for development as a specialist college has been very strong; relevant staff have shared a common purpose and improvement has been considerable. Excellence has been maintained in art and leadership is bringing very good improvement in music. Leadership in the lower school, science and Latin are good and in most other subjects satisfactory. However, response to Government's initiatives, to broaden the 14-19 curriculum and introduce WRL, has been slow. Students' progress in design and technology is limited by unsatisfactory accommodation and resources.
53. Management is satisfactory. The college is organised efficiently and day-to-day arrangements work smoothly. Administrative staff assist ably in this. Performance management is established. Action has been taken to reduce the workload of teachers. Budget restrictions have limited staff development opportunities. Training to develop specialist college status, support newly qualified teachers and the Government's Key Stage 3 Strategy has been maintained, but little else supported. Scope remains for disseminating good practice more widely. Planning is based on review of results and targets have been effective in raising these. Evaluation of results across the college is thorough, as it is in most departments. However, detailed and regular monitoring of students' progress in year groups and across the college is not yet possible. The college is introducing a computerised system to rectify this and bring coherence to partial information which is available in subjects and across some years. Evaluation of teaching and the curriculum is patchy and lacks rigour. Inconsistencies in teaching occur, planning for the full range of abilities is not uniformly developed, schemes of work are uneven in quality and relatively few links are made with the wider world, including industry and outside organisations. The co-ordination and management of special educational needs provision is good. All aspects have improved since the last inspection. Support for students with English as an additional language is well organised and managed. The co-ordinator of this provision is easily accessible to staff.
54. Strengths in leadership have led to good improvement since the previous inspection. Results at all levels have improved more quickly than nationally. Teaching is much improved, although some inconsistencies remain. Aspects of management are improved, including development planning, but curricular planning lacks expected detail in many subjects. While health and safety issues raised at the last inspection have been resolved, others are now identified and have been reported to the college. Most notably, the college has acquired specialist status and its progress towards its specialist college targets has been rapid. Most,

due to be achieved in four years, have been achieved in two. Particular benefits have accrued in mathematics and ICT, and more is said about these in subject paragraphs. More generally, enhancement in numeracy and ICT skills is benefiting the learning skills of students throughout. Weaknesses remaining are mostly due to inconsistencies in teaching and the curriculum, and reflect lack of rigour in monitoring and support for classroom practice.

### Sixth form

55. Leadership and governance of the sixth form are good, effectively supporting its growth and improvement in results over the last few years. Provision has been strengthened by the development of courses in ICT, and links initiated with a local girls' school, although in other respects response has been slight to the Government's 14-19 initiative. Leadership is good in most subjects, very good in mathematics and ICT and excellent in art. Management, likewise, is good. Day-to-day arrangements work smoothly, form tutors and subject teachers know students individually, and development plans are appropriate. Improvements are being made to monitoring arrangements for the sixth form, and these are timely. Nonetheless, because numbers are smaller than in the main college, this need is less acute. Students themselves are well satisfied and say the sixth form is well run. Sixth formers know they are respected and find the atmosphere friendly. They are thoughtful and willing to contribute to the college community. The ethos is positive and inclusive.

### Financial information

#### *Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004*

| Income and expenditure (£) |           | Balances (£)                        |       |
|----------------------------|-----------|-------------------------------------|-------|
| Total income               | 3,908,564 | Balance from previous year          | 1,677 |
| Total expenditure          | 3,905,932 | Balance carried forward to the next | 4,309 |
| Expenditure per student    | 3,803     |                                     |       |

56. Financial management is good. Resources for special purposes are used effectively. Careful planning has avoided a deficit budget in spite of considerable pressures and budget reductions. Spending decisions have focused on benefits for students and supported priorities for improvement; best value considerations have been central to these. However, in the last few years relatively little investment has been made in general staff development and in textbooks for older students. When account is taken of expenditure per student, which is below average, and achievement which is good, value for money in the main college and cost-effectiveness in the sixth form are both good.

### WORK RELATED LEARNING (WRL)

Provision for WRL is **unsatisfactory**.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The teaching of a regular and coherent programme of study in WRL and in developing the skills for employment for all students is irregular and unsatisfactory
- Provision for work experience in Year 10 and careers guidance are strengths
- Little work experience takes place in the sixth form and this is a weakness
- As a specialist college, worthwhile vocational computer courses have been introduced in Year 9, and at examination levels in Year 11 and the sixth form
- Some students in Years 10 and 11 benefit from vocational course links

## Commentary

57. The college is starting to address the wider aspects of the new statutory framework for WRL. Previously it had good practice in the fields of careers guidance and work experience and it is starting to build these into a coherent learning framework for all students. An audit of how subjects can contribute to more effective learning has been undertaken, but this requires significant development both in the range of experiences covered and in the coherence of what is planned so that students benefit from a systematic learning experience.
58. Arrangements for tracking students' individual progress in WRL have not started, but there is some good self-evaluation of work experience. This is organised successfully in Year 10 and valued by students. The college recognises the importance of work experience and gives prime time in the year to ensure its success. However, there is far less participation in work experience in the sixth form than in most schools. Students record their part-time employment and this is used effectively in their curriculum vitae, compiled in personal and social education lessons. Accredited vocational courses in computer studies are provided in the main college and the sixth form as part of specialist college provision. Some students who would receive most benefit are encouraged to attend vocational craft courses at the local further education college or training centre. The timetable is well planned to allow this, while permitting students to take up to eight GCSE subjects.
59. The college arranges for students to attend a local careers conference in Year 10, where outside organisations provide information about careers and offer guidance. Links with Connexions, the careers service, are close and very effective and extra support is given according to students' needs. All students have access to quality materials and advice from the college's careers library, specialist teaching staff and the local careers advisor. However, there is an absence of outside speakers to develop an understanding of current affairs and matters of business and industry. Similarly extra-curricular activities, like Young Enterprise, and focused visits to industry linked to subjects, are insufficiently developed.
60. The college recognises that WRL is an important area for further development. A policy is being planned for the end of the year but much more needs to be done. Leadership has not satisfactorily encompassed work in subjects. Systematic planning across the curriculum is weak: in most areas opportunities need to be identified and activities organised. Staff need more training. Although there are several features of good practice, the current effectiveness of WRL on the learning and lives of the students is unsatisfactory.

# **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**

Provision in English is **good**.

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

- Achievement is good at GCSE in which results in English are above average
- English literature results are not as good as in English
- Leadership has focused effectively on attainment and assessment which is thorough, but less emphasis has been placed on monitoring classroom practice
- Sharing of good practice and co-ordination in the department are uneven because of teachers' disparate responsibilities
- Emphasis placed on literacy is inconsistent across subjects
- English teaching rooms are widely separated and vary significantly in equipment and furnishing

#### **Commentary**

61. In Year 7 students' standards are average; few are very low or very high attaining. Results of Year 9 National Curriculum tests are in line with the national average, and above average for only a few. In lessons standards are better; more are attaining at higher levels and achievement is good.
62. By the end of Year 11, students achieve well in English. Results at the higher grades (A\* to C) in GCSE English are consistently above the national average and well above the average for boys, but in 2004 fewer than nationally gained the highest grades (A\* and A). Results in English literature are broadly average. In 2004 they dipped when some students were entered for the higher, not the foundation, tier. Generally students perform as well or a little better in GCSE English than in their other subjects, but they do not match their success in mathematics. Unusually, they do not do as well in literature examinations as in English. This pattern is the reverse of that found nationally. In Year 11 standards in lessons are in line with results. In some lessons, students show little enthusiasm for literature.
63. At the end of Year 9, students explain their ideas well. Listening skills are satisfactory. Comprehension skills are good particularly when reading non-fiction. Students are less confident in extracting the full meaning from poetic or figurative language, but do so when encouraged, as in Year 9 lessons on Macbeth. Their writing skills are good. They organise and expand their ideas and express them with reasonable accuracy. Year 11 students build upon these skills. They enjoy media studies work, writing more extensively. The strategy of 'point, quote and explain' is helping them to extend ideas. Some higher attaining students are more analytical, but this skill is not generally well developed. No differences were apparent in the achievement of students of different ethnic backgrounds.
64. The quality of teaching and learning is generally good, though there is some unevenness. Teachers know students well and successfully secure their co-operation. On the whole, students' attitudes are good, they are willing to listen and want to do well. Behaviour is good in all lessons. Relationships are good and the atmosphere is purposeful. Teachers mark work carefully: comments are helpful and progress towards targets is noted. Students understand the progress they are making through the levels and grades they are given. However, differences in methods result from disparities in accommodation. In one room the only equipment is a blackboard with a poor surface; in other rooms whiteboards, some interactive, and sometimes computers are available. The most successful lessons are

carefully planned to link varied activities to the lesson objectives. Students are then more interested and involved in their learning. Students with special educational needs and those learning English as an additional language achieve as well as others.

65. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The head of department has successfully established a consistent assessment policy, including moderation and use of National Curriculum levels. However, there is no well-defined and agreed approach to the monitoring of teaching, students' work books and their reading, and good practice is not routinely shared. As some teachers have other responsibilities in the college, departmental meetings and training are difficult to arrange. Since the last inspection, there has been some improvement in accommodation. Standards at the end of Year 9 have risen and results in English have improved, with results in literature remaining about the same. Teaching has remained good. Improvement is satisfactory.

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

66. Overall, students' written and oral communication is satisfactory. Students enter Year 7 with average literacy skills. They speak confidently using formal language, as appropriate. Opportunities for students to improve their oral skills are frequent in some subjects, notably in English and art, but are more variable in science and less frequent in other subjects. Key words are taught in subjects but few subjects develop the use of these systematically. Listening skills are at least satisfactory; students listen quietly though not always as actively as they should. Comprehension skills are good and students have no difficulties in understanding textbooks. Less able readers in Years 7, 8 and 9 receive help in their classes and some have additional support in form periods. Individuals enjoy reading and have opportunities in Year 7 form time, in the bilingual reading club, and in the library, which is a very welcoming environment. Though the English department has introduced reading logs, none were seen and guidance on titles was unsystematic. The literacy working party has focused on writing and most students write at least satisfactorily. Written work is organised and spelling, punctuation and grammar are correctly used. In art, students structure their work well, summarise research and are able to evaluate it, but literacy is not a focus in French. Literacy has improved since the last inspection but would benefit from continuing whole school attention and monitoring, because the emphasis placed on literacy by departments varies, so students' progress is uneven.

### **Modern foreign languages**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- GCSE results in 2004 were well above the national average for boys in French
- Most students achieve well in Years 10 and 11. However, there is unevenness in how well students achieve overall, related to the quality of teaching and planning
- Management is unsatisfactory. A lack of rigour allows inconsistencies in provision to persist
- Resources for learning have improved. The use of ICT is beginning to have a positive impact on attitudes
- Students do not receive enough advice on how to improve, either in marking or reports

### **Commentary**

67. Teachers' assessments indicate standards that are well above expectations by the end of Year 9. However, the number reaching higher levels is depressed by low curricular time for students in top sets in Years 8 and 9. Inspection evidence shows standards meeting, but not exceeding, expectations, with unusual variation between classes, dependent on the teacher. Achievement is generally satisfactory, but unsatisfactory for gifted students and those with special educational needs, because assessment data are not used to plan their work. Most

students learn to form tenses and provide opinions within prescribed topics, but few produce French confidently or accurately in speaking or writing.

68. GCSE results have been well above the national average for boys in recent years, and are significantly higher than at the previous inspection six years ago. However, more recently results have started to dip, with very few gaining the highest grades, A\* and A. Standards seen were above average, indicating good achievement overall. All students write at good length in coursework assignments. The focus on length rather than accuracy continues to inhibit achievement at the highest grades. Much pronunciation is weak, sometimes affecting communication, but most make progress from basic exchanges to more rounded conversational language in oral work. Listening is not as well developed as reading because students hear too little French in many lessons. Students with special educational needs benefit from a modified course, but their achievement, and that of others in lower sets, is unsatisfactory, reflecting some negative attitudes. Little significant difference was seen in the participation and standards of students of ethnic minority backgrounds.
69. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teaching ranges from very good to poor. Teachers plan varied activities, sometimes making effective use of games, pair work and ICT to engage and motivate students. In Years 10 and 11, teaching is more consistently effective because good knowledge of GCSE requirements is well used to direct learning. However, teachers use too much English, lowering expectations and depriving students of listening opportunities. All students do the same work, with no account taken of prior attainment. The National Key Stage 3 strategy has had no impact on planning. Classroom management sometimes depends on unnecessary shouting. Consequently, too many students have poor attitudes, shown by their low level of concentration and the unusual extent of incomplete work. In lessons where teachers use French consistently and plan attractive tasks, students achieve very well, and there is no misbehaviour. Neither in marking nor reports is there consistent provision of helpful guidance on how to improve. Homework varies in its demands, and is sometimes too easy, especially in Years 7 to 9.
70. The head of department provides satisfactory leadership, through his own teaching and adequate procedures for monitoring work and analysing results. Management is unsatisfactory. Not enough use is made of monitoring information and analysis to improve provision. Schemes of work do not provide guidance on planning for a range of ability, development priorities lack related strategies, and too many inconsistencies persist in teaching and marking. Compared to the previous inspection, there are now much better resources, especially textbooks. New electronic whiteboards are beginning to improve the range of teaching methods, and students' attitudes. Standards and results have improved. However, provision has been impoverished by the loss of the second foreign language and of foreign language assistants. Insufficient progress has been made in important areas, notably inconsistent teaching, use of assessment, and staff training for the integration of national initiatives, so that improvement overall is only satisfactory.

## **MATHEMATICS**

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Students achieve very well: standards in all years are well above average
- Teaching is very good with effective use of assessment to help students to learn very effectively
- Specialist status as a mathematics and computing college has enriched provision
- High calibre teaching staff and very good leadership are strengths
- Not enough homework is set and some is not marked



## **Commentary**

71. Attainment on entry is a little above average. Results in 2004 national tests at the end of Year 9 and at GCSE were well above average, compared with all schools and boys nationally. When compared with schools with similar prior attainment results were very high. Year 9 results are improving much faster than nationally. GCSE results are also improving. More able students have opportunity to take GCSE statistics in Year 10 and their success rate is very high: nearly all gain a higher grade A\* to C. Standards have risen due to better teaching and learning which stem from the strong leadership provided by the head of department. Standards of work seen on inspection are consistent with recent tests and examination results.
72. Achievement in all years is very good. In Years 7 to 9 Indian, Pakistani and Black African boys make the most progress showing on average an improvement of more than two National Curriculum levels. Younger students with special education needs achieve well in Years 7 to 9 but this slows to satisfactory in Year 10 and 11. The achievement of gifted and talented students is in line with that of other students.
73. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers have very good command of the subject and consistently plan lessons well. They have high expectations of students which leads to very good behaviour and a sustained work rate in lessons, so students achieve very well. In the best lessons very effective use of questioning leads to good quality class discussion with students explaining how they arrive at answers and sharing understanding. Extensive and effective use is made of interactive white boards in lessons. This helps to speed up the pace of lessons and contributes positively to developing understanding through high quality visual representations. Opportunities for students to use this technology themselves are sometimes missed. Lesson endings are generally the least successful part of the lesson; too often learning objectives which have been previously explained are reviewed and teachers do not spend enough time evaluating students' understanding of the topic. Homework is set but not often enough and there is limited evidence in exercise books of teachers marking and monitoring this. However, good procedures are used by teachers to regularly assess students through testing. Information from tests is used both to inform planning and to identify for students what they need to do to improve.
74. The department is very well led and management is good. The head of department has clear vision and is aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the mathematics provision. He works well with teachers who are enthusiastic and committed to high standards. Effective procedures are in place to monitor teaching and learning through lesson observation. The specialist status of the college has enriched the mathematics provision through improved use of ICT, stronger subject links with primary schools and good extra-curricular opportunities, which have all impacted positively on standards. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good. Standards are significantly higher through better teaching and learning. Assessment and the use of ICT are now good.

## **Mathematics across the curriculum**

75. Students' competence in mathematics is above average and they cope well when using and applying mathematics in other subjects. In design and technology students demonstrate good measuring skills, use of scales and spatial awareness. Students make effective use of calculations and graphs in science and appropriate use of data and graphical information in geography and history. The development of numeracy skills across subjects has been well co-ordinated by an assistant head teacher.

## SCIENCE

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students in Years 10 and 11 achieve well, but scientific enquiry skills are underdeveloped in Years 7 to 9 and not enough use is made of ICT by students themselves
- Students' achievements have improved in recent years due to the good leadership provided by the head of department
- Teachers' good questioning helps students to recall and to explain key ideas
- In weaker lessons, methods are unimaginative and students inattentive, so they do not learn enough
- Monitoring and evaluation of assessment and teaching lack rigour so inconsistencies occur

### Commentary

76. Results of Year 9 National Curriculum tests in 2004 were above the national average. In relation to schools with similar attainment on entry, achievement was about average. Results were similar to those in 2003 and better than those in previous years. Year 9 results are rising faster than nationally, due mainly to the good leadership provided by the head of department. GCSE results in 2004 were a little above average compared with all schools nationally and boys; students achieved well.
77. Standards seen during the inspection were above average by Year 9 and students' achievements satisfactory. However, their understanding of key concepts and principles is better developed than their scientific enquiry skills, which do not receive enough emphasis in the curriculum and are not taught consistently. Students build on their knowledge and understanding well because teachers use questioning effectively to help students recall their prior knowledge and make connections between related concepts. Students are expected to explain and reason for themselves. Practical activities are used effectively to illustrate and to explore scientific principles. However, not enough emphasis is placed on students planning and carrying out their own investigations and in evaluating their methods. ICT is not used enough in investigative work to gather, analyse and present data from experiments. By Year 9, the more able, in particular, have not progressed as much in these skills as in other aspects of science. Students with special educational needs achieve well when given individual support. However, in Years 7 and 8, where the range of ability is wider in some classes, not enough attention is given to ensuring that work is appropriately adapted for the range of abilities and to deployment of any learning support. In more effective lessons, teachers monitor students' progress as they work and provide support where needed.
78. In Years 10 and 11, students' achievements are good and they achieve above average standards by Year 11. Most Year 11 students understand features of radioactivity and can derive measures of half-life from experimental data; the more able have a good grasp of the nature of radioactive decay and how to represent it using the correct notation. More able students achieve well in Years 10 and 11, particularly in physics and chemistry where teachers' expectations of students are consistently high. The grouping of students by ability is effective in ensuring work is challenging for all abilities and specialist teachers are effectively deployed in these years. Minority ethnic groups achieve as well as the rest. Lower attaining students and those with special educational needs also achieve well; they are taught in smaller groups and work is appropriately adapted to their needs.
79. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall; both are more consistently good in Years 10 and 11 but a little is unsatisfactory. Most lessons are structured well and achieve a good balance of discussion and group or individual activity. Teachers' good subject knowledge underpins their very clear explanations of key concepts. Questioning is generally used well to encourage students to think and explain. Starter activities are generally effective in helping

students apply their learning. Objectives for lessons tend to focus students' knowledge and understanding and sometimes miss opportunities to develop investigative skills. In the better lessons, the pace is good and students co-operate well in shared tasks and activities. ICT is used effectively to illustrate key ideas and develop students' thinking in class work. Marking is generally good. In the weaker and unsatisfactory lessons, teaching methods are unimaginative, chatter and inattention amongst students are tolerated and the pace and quality of their work are not checked, so that some do not learn or achieve enough.

80. Satisfactory improvement has been made since the last inspection; the use of ICT has improved, although there is still some way to go. Standards by Year 11 have also improved. The head of department provides effective leadership and direction. He is a good role-model to others in his own teaching, promotes a good team spirit amongst the staff and has undertaken a thorough analysis of standards in national tests to underpin the department's development plan. However, management is just satisfactory. The department's assessment database does not include scientific enquiry skills in Years 7 to 9. While the head of department monitors patterns in students' performance, such practice is not central to the work of other staff and actions to address potential underachievement are not systematic and thorough. Teaching is not monitored systematically, so inconsistencies are not tackled promptly and the impact of the National Key Stage 3 Strategy has not been evaluated.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

Provision in information and communication technology (ICT) is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Achievement is good because of skilled teaching by expert staff, visionary leadership and an innovative curriculum
- Assessment is not fine-tuned to ensure that each student precisely understands what level they have reached and the details of their next learning target
- Whilst good use is made of national data to evaluate teaching and learning other aspects of monitoring lack rigour

### **Commentary**

81. In 2004 teacher assessments of ICT at the end of Year 9 were above national expectations, especially at higher levels. Inspection evidence confirms this judgement. In 2004, relatively few students took GCSE in ICT. Their results were broadly average; this had been the pattern in previous years. The rest of the year group did not study for GCSE or any other accreditation. This has been remedied. Three-quarters of students in Years 10 and 11 are studying the applied GCSE double option course. Standards in Year 11 are average. Although teaching is good, the double option is studied in the time normally allocated for a single GCSE and there is not enough lesson time for consolidation of learning and detailed project work. Students who do not take the double option follow innovative vocational courses that focus on networking and other technical skills in which attainment is high.
82. Students achieve well by the end of Year 9. They start in Year 7 with varied experiences of ICT but the brisk pace of learning helps them to progress well. Students have good understanding of the various aspects of ICT and can apply their knowledge in new contexts. Their understanding of control is less developed but the department is aware of this and has taken action to improve it. They benefit from many opportunities to extend their understanding, ranging from lunchtime clubs about website design to the taking of extra vocational accredited units. The more able are well catered for. Year 11 GCSE students are achieving well as they left Year 9 without having studied a structured programme of ICT.

83. Teaching and learning are good. In carefully planned lessons, practical tasks reinforce theory, which students appreciate. Those with English as an additional language, and those with special educational needs, benefit from this approach and generally achieve well, although on occasion there is not enough focus on their specific learning targets. Clear explanation of learning goals engages interest and students are continually stimulated by the teachers' good subject knowledge and high quality teaching materials. Unsatisfactory teaching occurred when poor organisational skills resulted in much lesson time being lost. Subject and other vocabulary is satisfactorily taught and numeracy is well supported through the topics covered.
84. Leadership is very good. Improvement since the previous inspection has been very good, especially since the acquisition of specialist status. All students now take a public examination and standards at the end of Year 9 are above average. The head of department has a strong sense of purpose and has introduced an innovative curriculum, although schemes of work do not pinpoint links with citizenship and WRL. Links with local industry are not strong, however. Teachers' expertise is effectively deployed and positive teamwork among staff promotes enthusiasm for e-learning among students who use the very good extra-curricular facilities extensively. Management is good overall. The monitoring of statistical data related to teaching and learning is precise but there is no comprehensive strategy to monitor other aspects of performance. The department has already begun to look at ways of refining assessment but these are not yet in place.
85. The advent of specialist status in September 2003 led to rapid changes which have greatly benefited the college's ICT provision, not only in hardware but also in the areas of curriculum, staffing, accommodation and attainment. The curriculum for all years is now wide and gives access to a number of innovative, vocational courses which are industry-led, such as those awarded by the Cisco Academy. Students enjoy these courses. There has been a strong focus on developing a staff team with up-to-date knowledge and industrial experience, and more have been employed. The newer ICT suites provide accommodation of a very good standard and attainment in the new vocational courses is usually high. Local adults and primary schools benefit from the college's decision to commit their good, specialist staff to the teaching of these groups. Future plans are well thought out and appropriate.

#### **Information and communication technology across the curriculum**

86. Provision is satisfactory, reflecting a balance of strengths and weaknesses. Major development has occurred since specialist status was obtained. This includes the appointment, in July 2004, of an ICT specialist as co-ordinator and the reorganisation of the whole-college working party on a more permanent and effective basis. These changes have not yet had substantial impact on cross-curricular ICT. Audits and new policies are not completed. Variable use is made of ICT in other subjects. Students benefit from a wide range of extra-curricular provision which permeates the college day but aspects such as video conferencing and the college website are under-developed. Use of ICT is very good in music and good in design and technology, mathematics and history. Otherwise, it is satisfactory apart from French and art where it is unsatisfactory. The art department does not yet have its own ICT facilities, but they are planned. In a few departments problems remain, such as ease of access to ICT, lack of good training and suitable software.

## HUMANITIES

### Geography

Provision for geography is **satisfactory**.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE results in 2003 and 2004 have improved and now match the national average
- Schemes of work for Years 7 to 9 do not include sufficient opportunities for investigation, recording and evaluating
- Staff changes and weaknesses in marking and assessment have led to unsatisfactory achievement for students in Years 7 to 9

#### Commentary

87. Students' standards in Year 9 are broadly in line with national expectations. Their levels of knowledge and understanding of human and physical geography are higher than those indicated by the teacher assessments in 2004. However, the achievement for some students is unsatisfactory in Years 7 to 9. Some classes have not made enough progress because of changes in teacher, work has lacked challenge, not enough guidance has been provided for low attaining students or opportunities for all to develop enquiry skills, and marking has been unsatisfactory.
88. The standards of students at the end of Year 11 are in line with those nationally. GCSE results in 2003 and 2004 were slightly higher than the national average for boys. Achievement is satisfactory. Students reached their target grades in 2004 despite the staffing problems within the school, and most students in Year 11 make good progress in lessons. The teaching at this stage is authoritative, purposeful and well-directed to the GCSE syllabus. This indicates considerable improvement since the previous inspection when attainment and achievement were unsatisfactory. A continuing concern is that not all students are entered for the full GCSE at the end of Year 11.
89. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. There are strengths, as in the preparation of students for examinations, and weaknesses, as in the teaching of younger students in mixed attainment groups. Subject expertise is good but in some lessons the teacher's introductory talk is too long and this prevents students becoming active in their learning and leads to restive behaviour. In the best lessons, introductions are brief and students are engaged quickly in a series of related but challenging activities. Most lessons include good question and answer sessions with teachers involving all students. An area requiring improvement is that of identifying the particular needs of students on the register of special educational needs, to give them more direct help.
90. Leadership and management are satisfactory. A new head of department is tackling systematically the deficiencies noted in the previous inspection and at the same time dealing with current issues. Good progress has been made in developing a new GCSE course and a new coursework unit, more relevant to the students and focused on the immediate school environment. The most pressing issues have been correctly identified for urgent improvement. These comprise the revision of the lower college schemes of work to include more opportunities to develop field work and investigative activities, improvement in marking and assessment especially in Years 7 to 9, and broadening of the range of teaching and learning methods.
91. Satisfactory improvement has been made since the previous inspection, particularly in improving attainment at GCSE. The development plan indicates an awareness of the areas needing further improvement. Teaching accommodation in one room remains unsatisfactory.

## History

Provision in history is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well because of good teaching and learning
- GCSE results are a little below average but inspection shows improving standards
- Relationships are good enabling students to have positive attitudes to learning
- Assessment is not rigorous enough to monitor the progress and achievement of different ability groups, particularly in Years 7 to 9
- No extra-curricular and enrichment activities are provided but the access to computers outside lesson times helps students in their independent learning

### Commentary

92. GCSE results are a little below the overall national average and for boys and are lower than the average for the college. Inspection findings show that it is because of the wider ability range of students who take history for GCSE and yet gain a grade, including those with special educational needs and those who receive support in learning English as an additional language. Results are improving: by Year 9, most students reach average standards and a few exceed them. Students have a good sense of chronology and they know and understand the causes and effects of events in different periods of history; they achieve well. For example, in a lesson seen higher ability Year 9 students in pairs made a good power-point presentation on the most influential powers in Europe at around 1900, based on research using history websites. They used graphs effectively to show the relative size of armies and ships of the five main powers and argued why Britain was the strongest compared to Germany, Russia, France and Austria-Hungary. Older students question historical sources effectively to extract information to identify reasons and explain events, for example, the strengths and weaknesses of the Tsarist regime. Students achieve well in developing their historical skills of enquiry and interpretation.
93. Teaching and learning are good overall. Teachers have a good command of their subject and use a variety of effective teaching styles to question sources, even providing a one-to-one discussion with Stalin, using ICT. They teach historical terminology and skills systematically and cover examination requirements well. In lessons, teachers provide very effective challenge, keep a brisk pace and have high expectations both of behaviour and standards of work. Students with special educational needs are adequately supported. Students have good attitudes to learning. They collaborate well and generally contribute actively to their own learning, resulting in good achievement. However, sometimes too much time is spent on exposition and teacher-talk, which reduces students' motivation and the rate of their learning. Good, sometimes rapid, learning was seen when students were involved in a variety of activities, including the use of ICT, which captured their interest and extended their knowledge, helping them to reflect and so deepen their understanding. Assessment and marking are not sufficiently consistent and planning lacks detail. Links with literacy, numeracy and citizenship are not always clearly made, which reduces opportunities to build students' skills further.
94. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The subject leader displays enthusiasm for history and performance management is in place. Teamwork and relationships are good, providing a caring and supportive environment for students. Policies are sound, but the scheme of work is basic and links with other areas of the curriculum and the Key Stage 3 Strategy are not clear. History contributes well to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development but there are no extra-curricular activities to add enrichment. However, students are supported well by teachers in their homework and in lessons. Before the start of the college day and at

lunchtime there is a buzz of activity with students using computers. The main issues of the last inspection have been addressed well: improvement is good. More students who opt for history take relevant examinations in Year 11. The use of ICT is now transformed. The quality of teaching and learning is improved. However, assessment, while linked to National Curriculum levels in Years 7 to 9, is little used in planning and evaluating progress. Marking is not always consistent. Resources are limited for those who are gifted and talented and with special educational needs.

## Latin

Provision in Latin is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The effectively planned and managed curriculum enables students to achieve well
- The teacher's spoken Latin provides a very good model for students
- The timetable allowance in Years 8 and 9 is rather low
- Marking does not always give students enough guidance on improving their work
- Few outside trips are made to enrich the curriculum

### Commentary

95. The Latin course begins in Year 8 and students from the two top French sets take the subject to the end of Year 9. Of these, about 25 per cent choose Latin at GCSE; results were average in the last reported year, as they have been in other recent years. At the inspection, the standards seen in Year 9 were in line with expectations while those in Year 11 were above average. All students gain a good knowledge of vocabulary and higher attaining students quickly grasp how the endings of words show their function in a sentence - for example, students in Year 8 realised that *m* on the end of a noun made it the object of the sentence. Work is well planned and the stimulating course book helps students to build on previous work in a methodical fashion. Students of all backgrounds achieve well throughout, making up for the low time allocation in Years 8 and 9.
96. Teaching and learning are good. Students are given interesting tasks that challenge all ability levels appropriately. The teacher attaches great importance to speaking Latin in a way that provides a good example for the students. Written work is planned well to aid their achievement. The subject makes an effective contribution to the personal development of students. Topics such as slavery, the role of women, and classical religious practices are discussed as they arise in the syllabus. Marking is regular and supportive, but does not consistently give students detailed guidance about what they need to do to improve their work.
97. Good resources contribute to the effective teaching of the subject. The subject base is decorated with pictures and posters with classical relevance, albeit some of these are rather old. Displays of students' work show appropriate use of ICT. The course followed also has appropriate software which, after initial teething problems, is now used in lessons and students use the website associated with the course book to resolve difficulties or extend their learning. Students in all years use the Internet for research. However, there is little enrichment of the curriculum by visits to places of classical interest although some students have taken part in quizzes and verse reading competitions at other schools. Leadership and management of this small department are effective. While the last inspection did not report on Latin, good standards have been maintained in recent years.

## TECHNOLOGY

### Design and technology

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

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results at GCSE have improved and are now significantly above the average for boys
- With a dramatic change in staffing the standards of teaching vary from excellent to poor, so that some students do not learn enough and make limited progress
- Curricular plans for Years 7 to 9 are good, but staff are not able to deliver them as planned, which affects standards
- The teaching of electronics in Years 10 and 11 is notably good
- Accommodation is poor and resources are insufficient to allow students to make the progress of which they are capable
- The new ICT facilities provide quality experience, especially in computer-aided design and manufacture

#### Commentary

98. GCSE results in the last year have improved. They are significantly above the national average for boys on all measures, and the proportion entered is above average.
99. Overall students' attainment on entry and at the end of Year 9 is at national expectation, but there is little high attainment by the most able. Achievement in all years is broadly satisfactory, but it is teacher-dependent. Teaching and learning, while satisfactory overall, are very variable. Some students are not challenged enough and do not make enough progress. Some teachers find it hard to manage behaviour and so students do not work as hard as they should, or could. In very good and excellent lessons behaviour is immaculate and not a moment of learning is lost. Achievement in Years 10 and 11 varies. In electronics, students do very well. In the other design and technology subjects the teaching and learning received are more variable. In some classes, particularly those with many low attainers, progress is too slow.
100. Group sizes in every year are very large, with up to 26 students in a class. Often rooms are not big enough to fully contain them and there are not enough tools and equipment to go round. Students have to wait to use hand tools and machinery, slowing progress and lowering attainment. In addition, much of the equipment and machine tools are old and do not meet current safety requirements so they have been taken out of service. This again restricts what students can do and slows progress. For example, in one lesson seen students were hand-sanding their work, taking a whole period to get it smooth, whilst next to them was a machine which could not be used because it has no dust extraction, but it would have taken a fraction of the time.
101. The specialist room provides worthwhile experiences of the use of computers in design and manufacturing. The design programme is a valued addition and students are given copies on which to do their homework. However, the provision of ICT in workshops is a weakness. Not enough specialist technician support is provided, and teachers are preparing materials instead of preparing and marking students' work. They try to limit the impact by specifying only a limited range of materials that students can use, but this restricts the range of students' designs.
102. Curricular leadership within the department is good, but its impact is restricted due to changes in staff, so that overall it is barely satisfactory. Day-to-day management is good, but teaching



and learning approaches vary too much. Expectations of students are not consistently high. Improvement since the last inspection, while limited, is satisfactory. Curricular planning is improved and GCSE results are better.

## **VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS**

### **Art and design**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Students' achievement is excellent; GCSE examination results are very high
- Teachers bring professional expertise, meticulous planning and enthusiasm to their lessons
- Students work well independently and develop the confidence to be experimental
- Outstanding leadership motivates and influences teachers and students
- Access to ICT is unsatisfactory and restricts students' development of art technology

### **Commentary**

103. GCSE results are consistently very high when compared to national averages and exceptional relative to boys' schools. Year 9 teacher assessments in 2004 indicate that the majority of students reach standards well above expectations, with some exceptional performance.
104. Students enter the school with varied previous experiences of art. Nevertheless, achievement from Years 7 to 9 is excellent and the standards students attain in lessons are well above expectations. The regular emphasis on observational drawing is a factor in students developing very good all round skills. They understand how to use colour effectively in paint, print and collage because these skills are well taught. They use clay and other materials to extend their ideas in 3-dimensions. Students make thoughtful connections between their own work and the work of artists and art movements and make good use of the art books in each studio.
105. By Year 11, standards are very high. Students are very well motivated, often spending much of their own time building up their portfolios and sketch books, some of which are outstanding. Encouraged by their teachers, students use the skills they have learned earlier to experiment with ideas in a range of media and on different scales. All work is imaginative and individual. Those with special talents are quickly identified and given challenges that extend them; those with special educational needs have sensitive teacher support. The majority of students of all abilities are progressing at a fast rate, learning and achieving excellently. Students develop a good visual vocabulary with which to talk about their work. Teachers foster students' evaluative skills from Year 7 and through annotation and effective use of sketch books. By Year 11, students are self-critical and have detailed written records of their work and research. Students know their own ideas are valued and good relationships help to build their confidence and self-esteem. The opportunity to visit galleries and exhibitions allows students to enjoy art activities beyond the classroom. Students learn to refer to the work of artists and other cultures, adding enrichment to their work. They reflect on and explore issues of spirituality and this contributes well to the Catholic ethos of the school and to their personal development.
106. Teaching is outstandingly good so that learning is first-rate. Difficult ideas and skills are taught in highly effective ways by exceptionally skilled specialists. Lessons are thoroughly planned and taught so that students learn to think and explore ideas independently. With small classes, teachers ensure they give feedback to every student each lesson. All work is carefully marked so that students know how well they are doing. Teachers give their time generously to support students, from the highly committed GCSE students to younger

students who require help with their homework. However, lack of modern ICT equipment, criticised at the last inspection, is not yet available and is a serious constraint on students bringing their technology skills into their art work in the studios.

107. Leadership is enthusiastic, reflective and dedicated to achieving the highest possible standards. Management is very highly effective, recognising and sharing good practice amongst the art teaching team. The department benefits from working closely with a post-graduate teacher training institution and welcomes new ideas from its trainees. Improvement since the last inspection is very good. Exceptionally high standards have been maintained. The use of sketch books has improved and better use is made of assessment data to help raise standards further.

## **Music**

Provision in music is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teachers have very good subject expertise
- Planning is a strength and enables students to achieve well
- ICT opportunities are very good, particularly in Years 10 and 11
- Assessment procedures are only partially in place
- Accommodation is satisfactory but does not allow for the future development of the department

### **Commentary**

108. In Years 7 to 9, students benefit from very good planning in music. In a lesson observed they effectively extended their vocal compositions in ternary form, individual pieces varying from rap to accompanied free vocal sounds. Year 7 students reach above average standards in all areas of the music curriculum. Standards in Years 8 and 9 are average with a significant minority of students demonstrating above average musical awareness and practical skills. All students achieve well and those with special educational needs are individually supported and challenged appropriately. Gifted and talented students are stretched both in the classroom and through additional homework to further their musical skills. Team teaching in Year 9 contributes to students' progress in music. The department has had significant staffing problems since the last inspection, but the present team is making very good progress in addressing weaknesses and raising standards. Arrangements are very well managed.
109. A small number of students take GCSE in music. Results are much better than nationally for all schools and boys; in 2004 all students achieved higher grades (A\* to C). New ICT resources are enabling students to work to above average standards, in spite of discontinuities in their learning last year. For example, Year 11 used computer software to create a serial composition from a sequence of notes, which led to comparison with a serial composition by Stravinsky.
110. Students learn well because teaching is very good. Planning is very effective and caters for students of different abilities, so students build systematically on their knowledge and skills. Individual lessons are very well organised with good pace and challenge and high expectations. Attitudes are generally very good, but a few students in Year 8 lack concentration and distract others, which wastes the time of the class. Assessment procedures are only partially in place and marking is not consistent. Students are not aware of their individual targets for improvement. Assessment is not yet used as a tool to challenge, motivate and encourage greater effort.
111. Leadership of the department is very good and improvement in all areas has been very good since the last inspection. Resources are very good. Accommodation has improved and is adequate but there is no capacity for future development. The number and range of extra-curricular opportunities help to develop students' musical skills. Half-termly lunch-time concerts are popular, with over 50 students attending to support their contemporaries and

others. In addition one evening concert per term gives parents the opportunity to appreciate students' achievements. The department is open at lunch-times for students to practise or work on their compositions. Approximately 50 students take instrumental lessons, which are subsidised by the college for some and are provided free for examination students.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **satisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Assessment is not used systematically to track students' progress or set effective targets
- Good teaching leads to good achievement in practical physical education
- Students' evaluative skills are unsatisfactory
- Elements of management are not sufficiently rigorous to ensure the sharing of best practice in teaching and to keep abreast of new initiatives

### Commentary

112. Results in the 2004 GCSE examinations dipped and were well below average for all schools and for boys; students underachieved. In recent years results have usually been just above average. A sound improvement plan has been put into place by the head of department, which is enabling a start to be made in tackling this deterioration. Students achieve well throughout the college in the development of practical skills and improvements are being made in the students' evaluative skills, although their achievement in this aspect of physical education remains unsatisfactory.
113. A similar picture is apparent in Years 7 to 9. In games, students are achieving well and standards are in line with the national expectation. This was particularly evident in a basketball lesson when the enthusiasm of the students and good teaching ensured that they developed their skills effectively and achieved well. Overall, however, achievement is just satisfactory because the teaching of evaluation and how to improve is not yet having a sufficient impact. By Year 11, the practical skills of the majority of students are in line with national expectations, as in basketball and swimming, although their ability to evaluate and coach remains below average resulting in a lack of confidence when using technical vocabulary. Their practical skills become more refined and precise and overall achievement is satisfactory.
114. A number of students choose to follow a GCSE course in physical education. The standards of the majority are above average in their practical activity. Their theoretical work is average and they are achieving satisfactorily. The attitudes of a small minority are unsatisfactory. They do not complete their homework and are not inclined to work hard in lessons when asked to work independently. These students are underachieving. A small minority of students with behavioural problems, mostly black, are achieving well in practical lessons because they are well motivated, and respond well to the teachers expectations. Students of other ethnic minority backgrounds achieve as well as the rest.
115. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teaching is best in practical lessons where teachers use a good range of methods to consolidate learning, but generally weaker in theoretical aspects and the development of evaluative skills. Lower attaining students are not always given enough time to consolidate newly learnt skills. Numeracy and ICT skills are not always well developed. The use of assessment has been weak. However, the recently introduced system allows the progress of individuals to be tracked. Assessment is better used on the GCSE course but is not systematically structured to set targets for improvement and review. Notebooks are not rigorously checked for completion or the quality of students' work. The programme of extra-curricular activities is satisfactory. The inter-form competitions are very

popular and are a valuable source of income for enhancing ICT and physical education equipment. The teams are successful in local and county competitions in sports such as football, cross-country running and athletics with a local girls' school.

116. Leadership and management of the department are just satisfactory and have ensured satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. The teaching and provision in Years 10 and 11 are better. Students' attitudes to learning are much improved. However, slowness to act upon new national initiatives has limited the development of teaching methods and analytical use of assessment. There has also been complacency in ensuring that all teachers of swimming are fully qualified. This matter is now being tackled but is a serious health and safety issue.

## **BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES**

117. **Business studies** is a popular GCSE option. Results in GCSE examinations in 2004, as in 2003, were well above those for all schools nationally and for boys. Students generally achieve much better results in business studies than in their other subjects. Two lessons were sampled during the inspection. Teaching and learning were good overall. The teachers' use of very good clear lesson objectives resulted in Year 11 students gaining a very good understanding of marketing principles and skills in using them effectively in group discussion of ideas for coursework projects. Year 10 students undertook stimulating role-plays to experience the effects of industrial action in the workplace. Students in both Years 10 and 11 have very good attitudes to the subject due to teachers' very good subject knowledge and firm but friendly relationships. Students work hard individually and in mixed ethnic groups. They make good use of ICT when it is available.

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

118. In all years **personal and social education (PSE)** lessons are separately timetabled, and they were sampled during the inspection. Additionally, early morning form times and assemblies were sampled. Citizenship is covered, in part, in PSE lessons.
119. Teaching, learning and achievement were good in PSE lessons observed. The topics varied, including citizenship in Years 7 and 9, study skills in Year 12 and matters concerning the college council in Year 13. Curricular planning shows coverage of all required elements (health, sex and drugs education) augmented, in part, by topics in science, physical education and religious education. At appropriate times careers education is included in lessons and supplemented by extra events, such as conferences and visitors to the college. Teachers have good skills and enable students to participate well. Younger students were asked questions, researched using the Internet and joined in discussion. Older students took more responsibility for shaping their own learning and developed informed views of their own. In Year 13 the headboy led an evaluation of proposals put to the college council for improvements in sixth form facilities. The discussion was handled well and was useful.
120. Early morning form times (usually 20 minutes) allow time for registration, notices and a prayer. In Years 7 and 8 the rest of the time is usually usefully spent in a variety of activities: reading, news review, discussion of charities and monitoring of progress, for example. However, in Years 9 to 13, while examples were seen of constructive use of the time, generally much less happened and time was wasted. Assemblies are effective corporate occasions and reinforce students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Some are enhanced with music.

## Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **satisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The planning in most subjects identifies opportunities to promote citizenship
- The regular form tutor times develop students' knowledge of this area
- Visitors to the college enrich the curriculum
- Assessment needs further development
- Students are not always aware that they are being taught about citizenship

### Commentary

121. Students reach satisfactory standards by Years 9 and 11. Older students have clear views as to the value of the subject and express their views in a thoughtful way. Students understand the rights and responsibilities of living in a democratic society.
122. During the inspection there was little direct teaching of citizenship. Most of what was seen was in form tutor times and PSE lessons. Discussions with students also gave evidence for the standards attained. Overall, teaching and learning are satisfactory. In a good Year 7 session, students crystallised their own views in a supportive atmosphere. The teacher's effective questioning stimulated them to express their own opinions, which many did in a lucid way. Subjects such as history and geography include citizenship issues in their curricular schemes. This is a result of the school's planning to provide full coverage throughout the school. However, in discussion with students in Year 9 it was clear that they only had a hazy notion of which subject areas contributed to their knowledge of citizenship. This is because teachers do not always make students aware that the topic being taught is part of the citizenship curriculum. Assemblies and visiting speakers add further to students' knowledge. During the inspection visits by local police officers were effective in explaining the workings of the court system, and issues about weapons to students in Years 9 and 10. The teaching and planning of citizenship in these various ways help students to achieve satisfactorily overall.
123. Students are particularly active in supporting charitable initiatives. The college chooses most of these – like the Hamper project - but some are chosen by students, many of whom feel that the college's preferences carry undue weight. Year group councils provide opportunity for all to participate in the democratic process. Students in each year group elect their representatives, which gives them a voice in the running of the college. The college fulfils its statutory duties about reporting and assessing the achievement of students, but students in Years 9 and 11 do not have a clear idea of how well they are doing in the subject relative to others nationally. The 'De La Salle' award scheme has given students in Years 7 to 9 valuable insights into practical citizenship. This encourages the active participation of students in citizenship activities, both written and practical. The different stages in the award inform students about their progress, but the scheme is voluntary and, while the great majority of younger students participate, not all students take part.
124. The leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. The subject co-ordinator has been active in leading its introduction. Curricular plans are satisfactory. Developments are effectively co-ordinated by a college working party. However, the many commitments of the subject co-ordinator make it difficult for him to monitor how the subject is being delivered. Without this, future development is not securely based. Resources are adequate and in some classes there is extensive use of ICT, including interactive whiteboards and Internet sites, to improve students' knowledge of world events.

## SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

In the inspection, 13 subjects and courses were inspected and are reported on in detail. Work in other subjects and courses was sampled and contributed to the overall picture of teaching and learning in the college.

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2004.

### Level 3 GCE AS level courses

| Subject                 | Number entered | % gaining grades A-E |         | % gaining grades A-B |         | Average point score |         |
|-------------------------|----------------|----------------------|---------|----------------------|---------|---------------------|---------|
|                         |                | College              | England | College              | England | College             | England |
| Art and design          | 3              | 100                  | 71      | 33                   | 15      | 40                  | 24      |
| Biology                 | 1              | 100                  | 61      | 0                    | 10      | 30                  | 19      |
| Chemistry               | 1              | 0                    | 70      | 0                    | 13      | 0                   | 23      |
| Economics               | 2              | 100                  | 70      | 50                   | 17      | 35                  | 25      |
| Design and technology   | 3              | 100                  | 68      | 0                    | 10      | 23                  | 22      |
| Geography               | 1              | 100                  | 76      | 100                  | 20      | 50                  | 27      |
| Government and politics | 1              | 100                  | N/A     | 0                    | N/A     | 25                  | N/A     |
| History                 | 2              | 100                  | 81      | 0                    | 18      | 30                  | 28      |
| Information technology  | 1              | 100                  | 65      | 0                    | 8       | 20                  | 20      |
| Mathematics             | 8              | 25                   | 56      | 0                    | 12      | 5                   | 19      |
| Music                   | 3              | 100                  | 80      | 0                    | 17      | 30                  | 28      |
| Other social studies    | 13             | 100                  | 44      | 23                   | 11      | 33                  | 21      |
| Photography             | 2              | 100                  | N/A     | 100                  | N/A     | 50                  | N/A     |
| Physics                 | 1              | 100                  | 66      | 100                  | 15      | 50                  | 22      |
| Psychology              | 7              | 86                   | N/A     | 29                   | N/A     | 33                  | N/A     |

In line with college policy, students may 'cash in' their AS level results when they terminate their studies, so these results are not necessarily representative of the performance of teaching groups in 2003-2004.

### Level 3 GCE A level and VCE courses

| Subject               | Number entered | % gaining grades A-E |         | % gaining grades A-B |         | Average point score |         |
|-----------------------|----------------|----------------------|---------|----------------------|---------|---------------------|---------|
|                       |                | College              | England | College              | England | College             | England |
| Art and design        | 10             | 100                  | 97      | 100                  | 43      | 112                 | 82      |
| Biology               | 7              | 71                   | 96      | 29                   | 36      | 49                  | 76      |
| Chemistry             | 8              | 100                  | 97      | 13                   | 48      | 65                  | 84      |
| Economics             | 13             | 100                  | 99      | 39                   | 53      | 77                  | 89      |
| English literature    | 13             | 100                  | 99      | 39                   | 45      | 88                  | 85      |
| Design and technology | 10             | 100                  | 97      | 20                   | 29      | 76                  | 74      |
| French                | 1              | 100                  | 97      | 0                    | 67      | 80                  | 95      |
| Further mathematics   | 2              | 100                  | N/A     | 100                  | N/A     | 110                 | N/A     |
| Geography             | 4              | 100                  | 99      | 50                   | 41      | 85                  | 82      |
| History               | 10             | 100                  | 99      | 40                   | 42      | 82                  | 83      |

|                        |    |     |     |    |     |     |     |
|------------------------|----|-----|-----|----|-----|-----|-----|
| Information technology | 7  | 100 | 96  | 29 | 25  | 71  | 70  |
| Mathematics            | 22 | 91  | 97  | 55 | 56  | 82  | 89  |
| Other social studies   | 16 | 100 | 97  | 31 | 36  | 81  | 77  |
| Photography            | 4  | 100 | N/A | 75 | N/A | 110 | N/A |
| Physics                | 8  | 100 | 96  | 38 | 44  | 83  | 82  |
| Sports/PE              | 6  | 100 | 98  | 50 | 25  | 83  | 72  |

## ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

### English literature

English literature is provided at AS and A2 levels and was inspected in detail.

Provision in English literature is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers' good subject knowledge is used effectively in questioning students
- Students' learning is supported by their mature and positive attitudes and response
- Students are helped to improve by good marking
- Accommodation does not adequately support learning in all lessons
- Leadership and management are good
- Few visits and extra activities enrich the curriculum

### Commentary

125. Results at A2 level improved considerably in 2004 and matched the overall national average; boys achieved well and exceeded the national average for boys. In the last three years, all students have successfully gained a pass grade (A to E) but the proportion of high grades has fluctuated. AS level results for 2004 are not available. They were not finalised, in line with college policy, because all Year 12 students continued into Year 13. Generally sixth form students achieve results in line with their potential.
126. In lessons, standards are average and achievement is good. Students are articulate, and more so in the larger Year 12 classes, but all can argue their point, sometimes provocatively. Girls contribute well. Students' knowledge of the required texts is good and most refer to relevant detail. Teachers make sure that the context of texts is understood but there is little evidence of students reading widely for enjoyment. Writing is generally good: fluent and confident in both style and vocabulary. However, not all students develop the analytical skills required for the highest marks.
127. The quality of teaching and learning is good and there is some excellent teaching. The good subject knowledge of all the teachers is the basis of questioning that extends the students' analytical skills and understanding of texts. Much of the teaching is traditional which ensures that students can make effective notes and use them. In the best lessons examples were seen of very good planning so that students were involved in discussion, reading and writing, enabling them to put a text such as *Frankenstein* into context and analyse it closely. Study skills such as skim reading and constant revision are threaded into lessons. Accommodation is markedly diverse. Year 13 has a small room, adequate in size but without the facilities of interactive white boards available in rooms used by Year 12. Inevitably this limits the range of activities; map work in a Year 13 lesson lacked appropriate visual aids. A very good feature of the teaching is detailed marking, including not only specific comments but also points to encourage further thought.

128. Leadership and management are good. Teachers work closely together and relationships with students are good. Some teachers organise theatre visits to extend understanding, but there is no recent attendance of students at conferences to enrich their learning. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. Good provision has been maintained.

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

129. Students enter the sixth form with average competence in literacy. In lessons and discussions, Years 12 and 13 are articulate, giving their own opinions and expanding them effectively. They listen well, responding to arguments in a mature way. Their comprehension skills are good though there is no evidence that they read widely in any subject. In English lessons, specific skills such as skim reading are practised. Students make thorough notes in economics and English, for example, which are useful for revision. Essays are planned, paragraphing is clear and language is fluent. Most students use quotations and references appropriately.

### **French**

Provision in French is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Results at A2 level for small numbers of students have been above average in recent years
- Good teaching focuses effectively on providing a secure foundation for improvement
- The department has difficulty in recruiting and retaining students for sixth form courses
- There is no organised extra-curricular provision to enrich learning experiences and stimulate attitudes

### **Commentary**

130. Only small numbers of students have taken A2 level examinations recently. Results overall from 2002 to 2004 have been a little above average but in 2004 there was only one candidate. Provisional results at AS level in 2004 were disappointing; no students continued into Year 13.
131. In Year 12, one female and five male students are following the AS level course. Disruption to staffing is temporarily reducing the time allocated, and this is hindering progress. In lessons and work seen, standards are below average, because students' grammatical awareness and the accurate application of basic rules are underdeveloped. Consequently, teaching concentrates on providing a much more secure knowledge of structures, while attempting to inject a reasonable amount of idiomatic French into what students say and write. Evidence from work files and from conversation in small groups suggests that this strategy is improving confidence, so that achievement is satisfactory. A start has been made on developing students' competence in building and defending arguments, and drawing conclusions, for example, in writing about the risks of smoking. Comprehension skills remain weak, with a good deal of support and repetition needed, as students lack the expected understanding of vocabulary.
132. Good teaching leads to learning which is just satisfactory because students' comparatively low level of knowledge and confidence limits their ability to participate and forge ahead to the extent commonly seen at this stage of the course. In most lessons, teachers use French consistently and encourage students to reciprocate, with increasing impact, despite this being a slow process. Planning takes account of assessment data. Although the need to concentrate on basic language acquisition dominates planning, teachers provide a balanced range of tasks, and encourage independent effort, for example, in pair and group work. Students' lack of commitment is a further limiting factor, as some are already clear that they will not continue into Year 13. Teachers use a satisfactory range of resources, including French newspapers, and guide students towards websites where they can research



prescribed topics. Marking of extended writing is constructive and homework is well used to prompt students to take more responsibility for their learning.

133. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Previous results indicate well-directed provision for able students. Assessment procedures are established, with the small group size facilitating feedback, but there is no systematic individual review of progress towards targets. Schemes of work are skeletal, with no guidance on how to plan lessons and resources to deliver the objectives set by the examination board. The range of authentic resources is adequate, but not particularly stimulating compared to the rich provision in many schools. The key issue for the department is to develop strategies to attract more able students onto the AS level course and to enthuse them sufficiently to retain them. Currently, there is an absence of organised visits, either abroad or to the wealth of opportunities within London, so that students' experience is limited. Most lessons take place in a small unattractive room, which limits the possibility of using more imaginative resources. Provision is broadly similar to at the previous inspection.

## **MATHEMATICS**

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards at the end of Year 13 match those nationally
- Teaching and learning are good and because of this students achieve well
- Not enough use is made of ICT to support teaching and learning

### **Commentary**

134. Achievement in Years 12 and 13 is good, in lessons and examinations. Results at A2 level in 2004 were in line with the national average and better than predictions, based on students' GCSE results. Two of the students who took these examinations also took further mathematics and gained the highest (A and B) grades. In recent years AS level results have been well above average but in 2004 they fell to well below average, for the few students who completed their studies at this stage. Standards of work seen in both Years 12 and 13 are consistent with course expectations. Boys and girls achieve equally as well. The achievement of students whose first language is not English is similar to the rest.
135. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and provide clear explanation of mathematical principles. They carefully sequence lessons to build students' understanding systematically. Teachers' explanations and challenge for students are well balanced through effective questioning and opportunities for them to demonstrate to the rest of the class their solutions of problems and proofs. Students respond well and make good use of mathematical terminology and notation during class discussions. Independence in learning is encouraged by requiring students to take their own notes, undertake set reading and mark their own homework. Lesson pace is good and well matched to students' capabilities. Not enough use is made of ICT. Students would benefit from greater use of computers to enhance their understanding, for example, of algebraic equations and their curves.
136. Leadership is very good and sixth form work is well managed. The head of department provides a positive role model and is committed to working with a very good team of teachers to improve standards. Teachers' enthusiasm for the subject helps to motivate and inspire students. Help from teachers is available outside of lessons and students are also encouraged to work collaboratively with each other. Effective assessment procedures are in place to monitor students' performance and to give them accurate feedback on progress. Girls who join the school at the beginning of Year 12 are well integrated into the classes. Provision is good with opportunities to take further mathematics and to participate in

enrichment activities. Since the last inspection improvement has been good. The numbers of students studying the subjects to A2 level have increased, few students leave early and almost all now obtain a graded result.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

137. Students' competence in mathematics is above average. In economics, for example, Year 12 students make accurate calculations of market elasticity and interpret graphs well. Very good use is made of numeracy and spatial concepts in photography and art lessons and calculations, diagrams and graphs in chemistry and physics. Generally proficiency in mathematics supports learning well across all subjects.

## **SCIENCE**

The main focus was on chemistry and physics but biology and psychology were also sampled.

Results in **biology** have been below or well below those attained nationally for the last two years both at AS and A2 levels in which students have not achieved as well as expected. Teaching and learning observed were just satisfactory. In better lessons teaching showed strengths and lessons were well planned with effective use of starter activities and ICT. However, some teaching showed room for development because delivery was at a slow pace, repetitive and did not generate enthusiasm so students did not work hard enough. Not enough emphasis was placed on discussion, evaluation of techniques and the use of data.

Recent results in **psychology** at AS level have been above the national average. Teaching sampled was good and provided a variety of activities which involved students effectively in learning; they made good progress in understanding the concept of normality.

### **Chemistry**

Provision in chemistry is **good**.

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

- Standards are rising; students are achieving well, particularly in Year 13
- Consistently good teaching places emphasis on explanation, vocabulary and notation
- Lessons are stimulating; practical work is used well to help build students' understanding of key concepts and to relate different elements of the course
- Not enough checks are made on weaker students in lessons to ensure they are ready to move on, particularly in the very large class in Year 12
- Little use is made of the wider community to enrich students' experiences

### **Commentary**

138. In 2004, A2 level results were below average, although all students have passed in the most recent two years. Numbers studying at AS level have been rising rapidly in recent years but results do not show in statistics because students have not finalised their courses. In 2004, 18 students completed course modules, most achieved pass grades with a reasonable proportion achieving higher grades, but five did not pass. The department recognised that assessment of students' suitability for the course was not stringent enough. This year, the number taking the course has risen further. The department has raised the requirement for entry and put in place more rigorous review procedures at an early stage to ensure that students can cope with course demands. Inspection evidence suggests this is proving successful in reducing the risk of students not achieving pass grades.

139. Currently, 10 students are studying for A2 level in Year 13; they are achieving well and are on course to attain above average standards overall, with a good proportion working at the higher

grades A and B. They have a good grasp of advanced concepts, for example, the nature of energy changes accompanying chemical reactions involving ionic compounds. Their teachers insist on rigorous attention to correct notation and representation which ensures that students construct accurate diagrams to illustrate and calculate lattice energies in compounds such as sodium fluoride. Students are much involved in and enjoy the subject; a good balance is maintained between discussion and the use of experiment to help build students' understanding of key concepts and their practical skills are good.

140. In Year 12 the range of ability is wide and the class is large with 25 students. Their current standards are at least average for this stage of the course. A good proportion of more able students are achieving well and likely to gain higher grades in their course modules. Students are developing a sound understanding of key principles accompanying chemical changes. They are secure in their understanding of the structures and chemical characteristics of some groups of organic substances and can explain the underlying causes of structural and geometric isomerism. Lessons are stimulating and challenging as a result of their teachers' very good knowledge and enthusiasm for the subject. Students have regular checks of their understanding in lessons through short questions or class discussion but the responses of weaker students are not checked closely enough to ensure they are ready to move on.
141. Teaching and learning are good. Lessons are well planned around very clear objectives. Explanations are clear and very accurate. Technical vocabulary and notations are introduced and applied rigorously so that students quickly learn to use them. Effective questioning encourages students to seek their own explanations for patterns and helps them to make links between different parts of the course. Students sometimes research topics outside their lessons and present their findings to the group, aided by their good access to ICT, and this enriches learning. ICT is used well in lessons to enhance and illustrate, but less used in practical work. Students' progress is assessed regularly and teachers' marking, written comments and verbal feedback are much valued by students. Although students receive some guidance on reading and research outside lessons it tends to be general to the group and more could be done to match the guidance given to students' target grades.
142. The subject is led well by a knowledgeable and skilled subject leader. Management is satisfactory. Staffing has improved this year and there is good partnership between the two chemistry teachers; one is newly qualified and feels very well supported and guided. Effective use is made of target grades based on performance at GCSE: analyses of progress have helped to guide improvements, for example, to induction arrangements. However, currently almost no use is made of the wider community, especially higher education resources, to enrich and enhance students' learning. While many features remain the same as at the last inspection, A2 level results have improved.

## Physics

Provision in physics is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students are highly motivated and achieve well in response to good teaching
- Students' progress is monitored but information is not exploited well enough to closely target work to the needs of individuals and to provide feedback to them on how to improve
- Little reference is made to applications and wider aspects of physics to enhance learning
- The use of ICT in teaching is good but students' use is underdeveloped

## Commentary

143. In recent years A2 level results have varied around the national average and in 2004 they were better than this. Analysis of results shows that in 2004 the achievement of A2 level students was good, and that of AS level students was very good.
144. Achievement in both Years 12 and 13 is good. Overall standards are above average and range from very high - as shown in Year 13 test results and extensive work on a cloud chamber in Year 12 - to little below average and hesitancy in using metric units by some in Year 12. Students' written work is mostly well organised, but that of some is incomplete. Their understanding of fundamental principles is good, and very good in Year 13 of force fields. Students are generally competent in applying their understanding in calculations. However, their knowledge of practical applications of physics is not well developed.
145. Overall, teaching is good and some very good teaching was observed. Relationships are good. Work is well planned so students' learning progresses logically and is supported by information sheets, past questions and course details. Strengths in teaching are teachers' very good subject knowledge and familiarity with course and examination requirements. Emphasis on study for examinations and examination technique is helping to raise results. In the better lessons, good use is made of a range of teaching and learning styles, including powerpoint presentation and questioning. Where teaching shows room for improvement, there is a tendency for rapid progression through materials and a need for more awareness that some students may need support. Exposition by the teacher tends to be over-long and not enough attention is given to the timing of practical work. While interactive whiteboards and projectors are used well by teachers in lessons, students' use of ICT is under-developed, and there is little emphasis on independent learning, or reference to applications of physics and its use in the workplace. Overall, learning is good. Students enjoy their course, find astrophysics very interesting and thermodynamics challenging. They apply themselves well to their work, listen intently and work well in practical activities. In a lesson about force fields, they were very enthusiastic, asking and answering pertinent questions. Some feel they would benefit from guidance on how to improve their standards.
146. Leadership and management are good. The head of department has spent much time producing work books of examination questions. Teachers are sensibly deployed to match their skills and preferences. Planning ensures that topics are sequenced and completed on time. Teaching is monitored by lesson observations but these are not formalised. Examination and test results are recorded and the progress of students in particular units is reviewed. A database allows monitoring of student progress. Where students show weaknesses in understanding work books allow further practice and several remain behind for lunch-time support. Students are aware of the style of examination questions and know target and current grades. Homework and students' work-books are less rigorously marked than tests, and these marks are not consistently recorded. Feed-back to students on how to improve is not well developed. Students are informed of examination board revision courses but the curriculum is not enhanced significantly by activities or visits. Evaluation of provision and features which aid students' success is an area for development.
147. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Standards and laboratory provision have improved. More ICT hardware is available for teaching - although the use of ICT by students remains an area for development. The recording of assessment information has also improved but it is still little used in planning teaching and learning.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

Provision includes AS and A2 levels in ICT and computer studies. Level 3 vocational courses are provided in conjunction with the Cisco Academy.

Provision in ICT is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Examination results have steadily improved and standards are now broadly above average
- Achievement is very good, reflecting the high quality of the teaching
- Students have positive attitudes and are appreciative of their teachers' commitment
- Industrial links and placements are not used to extend the students' understanding
- Opportunities are missed to extend learning through greater student participation and students taking more responsibility for their own learning

### **Commentary**

148. Results at A2 and AS levels in ICT have risen steadily over the last three years and in 2004 results matched the national average. The first results for A2 level computer studies will be available in 2005. Standards in lessons and coursework are above average and indicate that improvement is continuing. Students on the A2 level ICT course have a good understanding of information management and factors affecting the choice of appropriate solutions. Year 12 computer studies students are working at standards in line with expectations for this stage of the course.
149. The first level 3 vocational awards will be completed in 2005. Year 13 students on the vocational course have developed good understanding of network systems. Year 12 students on the course are already exceeding expectations for this stage.
150. Improvement in results and students' very good achievement are due to teaching which is always good or better, allied to the greatly improved resources. It also reflects the very good relationships and the strong sense of partnership in learning. Students are impressed by their teachers' continuing willingness to help. Well-planned lessons are backed by good teaching materials which are effectively extended by questions and verbal comment. Students are encouraged to think imaginatively when solving problems such as the disadvantages of paper-based storage systems and the role of ICT in overcoming them. Learning is good but, at times, would be increased if students were more active in the learning process and took more responsibility. Students do not extend their understanding through work placements and this is a disadvantage for the students on the vocational course, particularly.
151. Leadership is very good and management good. Very considerable improvement has been made since the last inspection in the availability of computers and students' success in sixth form courses. The well-qualified team with good relevant industrial experience has worked purposefully and systematically to fulfil specialist goals. Excellent training has enhanced teachers' and technicians' understanding. The commitment of the team to an e-learning environment has underpinned the students' very positive response to the subject.

### **ICT across the curriculum**

152. Overall, cross-curricular ICT in the sixth form is just satisfactory. The use of technology is improving as a result of specialist course status. Most subjects are using ICT and some use it well, as in government and politics, but a minority of departments are not exploiting it to extend teaching and learning. For example, opportunities were missed in economics. Generally, an increasing and effective use is made of interactive whiteboards but there is scope for more direct student use in lessons. Outside of lessons students use ICT facilities well. They have access to 30 machines with internet facilities. Most students have at least

adequate skills for their courses but a significant shortcoming is the lack of any opportunity for students to improve their competence through ICT key skills lessons and thereby to gain additional accreditation. The department is reviewing the situation.

## **HUMANITIES**

### **Geography**

Provision in geography is **satisfactory**.

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

- Teachers have good subject knowledge and help students to achieve well
- Teachers spend more time than is necessary on lengthy exposition preventing students becoming more active learners

#### **Commentary**

153. Small numbers of students follow AS and A2 level courses each year and most complete the two year course. The four students taking the A2 level course in 2004 gained average grades compared with all schools nationally. This represents good achievement in relation to their attainment in GCSE and to the school's predicted grades. The written work of current students and their performance at AS level indicate that attainment is in line with standards expected at this stage of the course. Achievement is good in lessons where teachers provide opportunities for students to examine information and to make their own interpretations. Year 13 students were able to draw appropriate conclusions about the prevalence and the location of malaria in particular countries and continents by comparing and contrasting distribution maps from the 1950s and the 1990s. Students have sound background knowledge of climatic zones and economic development.
154. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Both teachers seen have good subject knowledge; they communicate effectively and provide suitably challenging source material for the course. Students are well-motivated; they respond well to questions and grasp new concepts quickly. In one of the lessons seen, students were mainly passive listeners for most of the time and were not engaged actively enough in their learning. Opportunity was missed for a seminar approach led by the teacher, to help students arrive more quickly at a good general understanding of how 'rurality' can be measured.
155. Leadership and management are good. The new head of department has re-established residential fieldwork at a centre adjacent to the North Downs to provide a stronger foundation for course work. The principal teachers maintain a good working dialogue and ensure that the students are monitored closely. The work of the department has improved satisfactorily since the previous inspection except in the area of varying approaches to teaching and learning.

### **Government and politics**

Provision in government and politics is **good**.

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

- The teacher's good subject knowledge is used effectively to develop students' understanding
- Facilities for ICT are very good and enhance students' research skills and their knowledge
- Results have risen steadily in recent years
- Students cannot attend sixth form games because of a timetable clash

#### **Commentary**

156. Results at both AS and A2 levels have shown improvement and are now above the average for the college and nationally.
157. Students come new to this subject in the sixth form and their early work reflects simplistic knowledge and understanding. However, they make good progress and by Year 13 they are able to express complex ideas with confidence, as seen in the lesson in which the students led discussion on the essays they had written covering aspects of American government. Results show that students achieve well on the course, and have real commitment to their work.
158. Overall, teaching and learning are good. The teacher who is responsible for all the teaching has good subject knowledge. He uses this effectively in questioning to develop students' understanding and in lesson planning which takes good account of the level of understanding of the students. A Year 12 lesson in which students worked in pairs, using the Internet to undertake research into members of the present Cabinet, engaged the whole class, leading directly to much enhanced knowledge and understanding. Students made very effective use of the bank of computers and the interactive whiteboard for individual research. Facilities for teaching and learning have been transformed over the last couple of years by the acquisition of these facilities. However, at times the style of lessons is too teacher dominated. When this is the case the students tend to play little active part, concentrating on writing notes from what the teacher is saying and what is on the board. This passivity does little to encourage discussion, or to develop ideas and understanding. Assessment of work is better for Year 13 students than for Year 12, as a result of the sheer weight of numbers in the latter group, with 27 students, which leaves little time for detailed marking of work. Rapport between teacher and students is very good. Students of all backgrounds, and the girls as well as boys in Year 12 are gaining a clear enjoyment from their studies, in addition to developing a good subject knowledge and understanding. There are no significant differences in the final results of the different groups.
159. The leadership and management of the subject are good. There is a real desire to see students achieve to the best of their ability and to teach options that best suit their aptitude and ability. At the time of the last inspection there was no specific report on this subject, but improving results and increasing numbers of students opting to take it show that provision is improving and overall is good. Several resourcing factors detract from this overall good picture. Textbooks are in short supply and students are expected to purchase their own. The range of computer software is narrow: more is needed to strengthen students' individual study and research. The siting of the teaching room, a long way from other classrooms for older students, leads to considerable loss of teaching time over the course of a year. Timetable arrangements prohibit students of government and politics from participating in sixth form games lessons, so they lose an opportunity to improve their health and fitness.

## History

Provision in history is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well in lessons although the results have been average
- Teaching is good because the teachers know their subject well and organise work effectively
- Students work well together but some are dependent upon their teachers for support

### Commentary

160. Results at A2 and AS levels in 2004 were average. In 2003 results were much better but the group was only half the size. The observation of work and learning in lessons during the inspection confirms broadly average standards and a good level of achievement. Students examine, explain and begin to judge differing historical interpretations well. In a lesson

observed in Year 13, students became increasingly confident in analysing and understanding the points of view of the northern states and the southerners about black slavery in America and the lessons learnt from the civil war about politics, leadership, technology and the logistics of warfare. Year 13 students are keen and participate fully in their learning, though some in Year 12 need additional prompting to answer questions and to improve and complete their written tasks.

161. Teachers have good subject knowledge and use it well to support learning which is systematic and good among students of all backgrounds. Group readings and discussions are balanced with appropriate intervention to make clear the complexity and stages of historical events and to consolidate and build on previous learning. In a Year 12 lesson with a group of 20 students, good use was made of the interactive whiteboard to help students to understand the role of Palmerston during 1846-1880 and how others viewed him and why. The teachers have good and friendly relationships with their students. They engage them effectively in discussions, challenge and encourage them to do well.
162. Leadership and management of history are sound. The system of monitoring and evaluating of students' results is good but its use to focus support on individuals and raise their standards is patchy. Accommodation and resources are satisfactory and resources such as computers are used well but there is a lot of dependence on photocopied material. Overall good improvement has been made since the last inspection. Teaching strategies are more varied, including the use of ICT, student numbers have increased and results are generally better.

## **ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING**

### **Design and technology**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Students achieve at least as well as prior results would indicate
- ICT is used very well to support learning, particularly in design and manufacture
- Students work hard to produce some interesting coursework that is set to solve everyday problems that are linked to the world of work
- Facilities for making coursework at the highest level are restricted because much equipment is old, has not been updated and is unused

### **Commentary**

163. In recent years results at AS and A2 levels have varied around the national averages. In 2004 they were slightly better than in 2003 when they were a little below average. Numbers of students studying courses are fairly small (five to 10) so it is difficult to establish trends. However, students generally start their courses with GCSE results which are a little below average for advanced level study and analysis shows their final results usually match or exceed predictions based on GCSE. Achievement is good among students of all backgrounds.
164. In Year 13, the work seen in the systems and control examination coursework was of above average quality and solved real life problems. For example, one student was looking at the problem of designing the interior lighting system for a car that switched on when any door was opened, remained on for a set period of time and then dimmed. Another was designing a programmable model children's car that would incorporate play with learning. In Year 12, the course has had to be changed because the previous course is no longer available. Students are developing good presentation skills but their design skills are at the lower end of AS level pass grades. These students have started the course with more modest GCSE results than usual and they are progressing satisfactorily.



165. Teaching and learning are good overall. The best teaching is very good, enabling Year 13 students to learn very well and make good use of colour, tone and ICT to produce an interesting range of ideas. The skills of the newest member of the department are effectively utilised to broaden the experiences of students. Whilst learning in Year 12 is not as focused or skilful, it is satisfactory and supported effectively by the very well structured scheme of work and assessments arrangements, which are satisfactory.
166. At departmental level leadership and management are good, but issues of poor accommodation, machine tools, resources and equipment mean that the direction for design and technology at this level is ineffective. The new computer-aided design and computer-aided manufacture (CAD/CAM) technology, provided from the specialist college initiative, is well used and of high quality. However, it does not make up for the unused machine tools which have not been upgraded to meet modern health and safety requirements and the shortage of quality tools and equipment that restrict learning and progress. In addition, the poor provision in technician time means that teachers spend too long preparing materials rather than their lessons. Sixth form design and technology was not inspected at the last inspection, but results are broadly similar.

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

167. Courses in art, music and photography are provided at AS and A2 levels. The focus of the inspection was on fine art. Additionally, a visit was made to a neighbouring girls' school to sample a lesson in media studies joined by three Year 12 students from St Joseph's.
168. Work in **music** was sampled. In 2004, three students achieved pass grades at AS level, despite staffing problems; no students took A2 level music. Students now taking A2 level are achieving above average standards in performing and composing. They also have good understanding of the requirements for the analytical and historical section of the music syllabus. They are learning and achieving very well, in response to very effective teaching.
169. Work in **photography** was also sampled. Results at both AS and A2 levels are high. Two lessons were observed, in Years 12 and 13, in which standards were outstanding. Students increased their knowledge of dark room photography, their technical skills and creative approaches. They achieved very well as a result of their strong motivation and consistently good teaching.
170. In the **media studies** lesson sampled students from St Joseph's achieved well as a result of very good, sensitive and well structured teaching. They integrated well in a discussion of advertisements aimed to shock the audience.

### **Fine art**

Provision in fine art is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Results are consistently well above the national average
- Achievement is very good with flexible arrangements for completing AS and A level modules
- Students benefit from teaching which is knowledgeable and often inspirational
- Students have their own sixth form working area in the studios
- Leadership is excellent and dedicated to achieving the highest possible standards
- Development of technology in art is limited by unsatisfactory access to equipment

## Commentary

171. A2 level results in 2004 and 2003 were well above the national average. In 2004, nearly all the students attained the top two grades. AS level results in recent years have usually been well above the national average; in 2004 they were above average. Results indicate very good achievement, particularly as some start the course with limited previous experience.
172. The standard of work seen was well above average but varied widely. By Year 13, students are producing imaginative and experimental work. They show confidence in using a range of media and they benefit from the strong foundation of high quality observational drawing they practised in earlier years. Students with considerable ICT skills are not yet able to develop ideas through computer-aided design and animation. ICT provision is planned but not yet in place. Most students work conscientiously, building up large portfolios. Higher attaining students present their work with flair and reflect critically and evaluate well on their appraisal. Many continue art-related studies in higher education. Lower attaining students articulate a personal view of the subject but generally lack in-depth critical skills and their work is less extensive.
173. Students' learning and achievement overall are very good. Although there are concerns about the irregular attendance of some, which slows their progress, the majority are motivated by their teachers' enthusiasm and commitment. They quickly learn to develop their work along lines that interest them as individuals. Encouraged by their teachers, higher attaining students gain confidence to take risks and make judgements about what is successful and what is not. Using good reference materials, they make connections with a wide range of artists and art movements, both western and from other cultures. The more able take increasing responsibility for their own learning but the lower attaining students remain more reliant on teacher support and direction. Sixth form students have a small but adequate working area and make good use of this by returning outside lesson time. The sixth form students of all backgrounds provide positive role models in their good attitudes and quality of work for younger students.
174. Teaching is very good. Teachers are highly skilled subject specialists. Students appreciate the extra time their teachers give them and relationships are very good. Teachers' regular verbal and written feedback in lessons is sensitive and gives good guidance on examination requirements and how to proceed. Students speak highly of this and of how much this helps them to develop their own critical awareness and pursue their own style. Students who find the work over-demanding are able to extend their AS or A2 studies into a further year in order to achieve their best, a flexibility made possible by the individualised approach. Teachers use the excellent displays of students' and others' art work as a resource to help learning. Very good opportunities are available to visit galleries in London and abroad and this extends provision and offers a rich experience beyond the classroom. Students explore issues of spirituality and morality in a visual form and this contributes very well to their personal development.
175. Leadership and management are excellent. Communication among the team of teachers is effective in sharing ideas and evaluating work. Numbers currently opting for art and design have fluctuated but girls joining the sixth form or who come solely for art integrate and achieve very well. High standards have been maintained since the last inspection.

## **HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL**

### **Physical education**

Provision in physical education is **satisfactory**.

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

- Assessment is not used systematically to track students' progress or to set effective targets
- The good relationship between students and teachers motivates additional participation in sport
- Elements of management are not sufficiently rigorous to ensure the sharing of best practice in teaching or to keep abreast of new national initiatives

#### **Commentary**

176. A2 level results in 2004 and 2003 were well above the national averages; students individually achieved very well. Few students took the examinations so detailed statistical analysis is not valid. Provisional AS level results in 2004, however, were very disappointing; students underachieved.
177. Currently, students who are following the AS and A2 level courses are reaching average standards and achieving satisfactorily. Their lesson notes are detailed but there is little evidence of additional independent study or varied research to add depth to their knowledge. Their notebooks are often poorly organised; notes and handouts on different aspects are muddled together. Students in Year 12 do not always use technical vocabulary confidently. However, they do use their knowledge from modules such as skill acquisition and psychology of sport to improve their own personal performance in their chosen sports. Students in Year 13 discuss and use logical arguments to express their knowledge and views on leadership qualities. Students opting to follow the recreational programme enjoy the activities, though the choice for girls is limited. The girls studying AS level feel well supported in their academic studies.
178. The quality of teaching is satisfactory. The teachers have good subject knowledge, but use a very limited range of teaching styles, so students' learning is just satisfactory. Generally too much reliance is placed on note-taking. ICT is not widely used because there are limited resources in the teaching base. The use of target-setting and tracking of students' work is not systematically managed. Work is rarely marked formally so students do not have enough recorded information to help them to improve. Verbal feedback is comprehensive in lessons and students value the teachers' support in this respect.
179. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory; AS and A2 level courses are well established and the recreational programme is popular. There are regular fixtures for those who wish to play in teams. However, the slowness to act upon new national initiatives has limited development of teaching methods and analytical use of assessment. No vocational or community courses are provided.

## **BUSINESS**

### **Economics**

The provision in economics is **good**

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

- Students make good progress and develop sound economic knowledge and skills
- Well-managed teaching is good, with some very good features
- Students do not use ICT enough to develop their key skills

- Links with local economic organisations are under-developed

### **Commentary**

180. Economics is a well-established subject and popular in the sixth form. Overall, standards in lessons and work seen at AS and A2 levels are average. A2 level results in 2004 for 13 students were below average, as in 2003, with most students gaining a D grade. Most students' achievement was satisfactory from GCSE standards on entry, although some boys under-achieved. In the AS level examinations, results in 2004 were in line with those nationally, reflecting good achievement by students, and maintaining the good trend from previous years.
181. Standards in lessons and work seen of current Year 13 (A2 level) students were average, and students are achieving well, an improvement from last year. Most students' notes are neat and well organised and key terms such as elasticity are defined in satisfactory depth. Evaluations are sufficiently detailed. Students draw clear, well-labelled supply and demand curves to analyse firms' competitive positions, and their literacy and numeracy skills are well in line with expectations. However, students do not use ICT enough for research, the analysis of economic data using spreadsheets, and to present their work.
182. Teaching and learning are good, with very good features, including teachers' very good subject knowledge underpinning class discussions. Briskly-paced lessons help students to consolidate previous learning on difficult concepts. Students of all ethnic backgrounds work very well together. The teacher has supportive relationships with students. Marking is detailed and regular, although weaker students sometimes need more support, with more detailed written targets for improvement.
183. Leadership and management of the subject are good. The subject leader monitors students' progress well against predicted grades. Standards have improved very much over the past five years; the subject was not offered at the time of the last inspection. However, provision is not enriched through links with local economic organisations.

## 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>3</b>            |
| Attendance  | 3                       | 3                   |
| Attitudes   | 3                       | 3                   |
| Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions                                 | 2                       | 3                   |
| Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development                   |                         | 3                   |
| <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                                  | 4                       | 4                   |
| Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities              |                         | 4                   |
| Accommodation and resources   | 4                       | 4                   |
| Students' care, welfare, health and safety                                    |                         | 4                   |
| Support, advice and guidance for students                                     | 3                       | 4                   |
| How well the school seeks and acts on students' views                         | 4                       | 4                   |
| The effectiveness of the school's links with parents                          |                         | 3                   |
| The quality of the school's links with the community                          | 4                       | 4                   |
| The school's links with other schools and schools                             | 3                       | 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 | 3 | 4 |
|---------------------------------|---|---|

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