

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **The Douay Martyrs Roman Catholic School**

Uxbridge, Middlesex

LEA area: Hillingdon

Unique reference number: 102448

Headteacher: Mrs Geraldine Davies

Lead inspector: Brian Oppenheim

Dates of inspection: 17 – 20 January 2005

Inspection number: 268958

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 years  |
| Gender of students:          | Mixed  |
| Number on roll:              | 1341   |
| School address:              | Edinburgh Drive<br>Ickenham<br>Uxbridge<br>Middlesex |
| Postcode:                    | UB10 8QY   |
| Telephone number:            | 01895 679400   |
| Fax number:                  | 01895 679401   |
| Appropriate authority:       | The governing body                                   |
| Name of chair of governors:  | Father Timothy Hutton                                |
| Date of previous inspection: | 1 March 1999   |

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

The Douay Martyrs RC School is a large Voluntary Aided Roman Catholic comprehensive secondary school for boys and girls. The school has been a specialist Engineering College since September 2004. There are just over 1340 students aged 11 to 19 including 235 in the sixth form. About 83 per cent of the students are Catholic. Most students come from across the London Borough of Hillingdon but around a quarter live further away. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is similar to the national average. The number of pupils who join the school after the start of Year 7 is a little higher than in other schools. The proportion of pupils who have identified special educational needs is average, while the proportion with a statement of special educational need is below average.

Around 57 per cent of students come from white British backgrounds. Some forty per cent come from a broad range of different backgrounds and heritages including Irish, Asian, Caribbean and African. There are eight students who are at an early stage of learning English but nearly 10 per cent of students speak English as an additional language. Three hundred and four students are supported through the Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant. There are seven Traveller students. The achievements of pupils when they join the school at the start of Year 7 are broadly average.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

| Members of the inspection team |                   |                | Subject responsibilities                                       |
|--------------------------------|-------------------|----------------|--|
| 2686                           | Brian Oppenheim   | Lead inspector | Sixth form citizenship   |
| 9865                           | Sue Howley        | Lay inspector  |  |
| 12003                          | Andrew Marfleet   | Team inspector | English 11-16  |
| 31238                          | Gordon Clubb      | Team inspector | Mathematics 11-16, P16   |
| 11828                          | Desmond Dunne     | Team inspector | Science 11-16, Chemistry P16                                   |
| 31688                          | Brian McGonagle   | Team inspector | Art and design 11-16, P16                                      |
| 7084                           | Jack Haslam       | Team inspector | Design and technology 11-16                                    |
| 32297                          | Chris Martin      | Team inspector | Geography 11-16  |
| 24127                          | Jim Kidd          | Team inspector | History 11-16, P16   |
| 6364                           | Geoff Strack      | Team inspector | Information and communication technology 11-16, P16            |
| 19613                          | Sue Thomas-Pounce | Team inspector | Music 11-16, Citizenship 11-16                                 |
| 32414                          | Michele Messaoudi | Team inspector | Modern foreign languages 11-16                                 |
| 20192                          | Terry McDermott   | Team inspector | Physical education 11-16, P16                                  |
| 1880                           | Garry Bignell     | Team inspector | Special educational needs<br>English as an additional language |
| 23268                          | Kevin Corrigan    | Team inspector | Business education 11-16, P16<br>Work related learning         |
| 4351                           | Jeanne Strickland | Team inspector | English P16  |
| 3258                           | David Bain        | Team inspector | Psychology   |

The inspection contractor was:

icp

360 Lee Valley Technopark  
Ashley Road  
London  
N17 9LN

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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

The Douay Martyrs School is a **good school** but there are still some areas that are not strong enough. Some very good training and support for teachers have helped to reduce the number of temporary staff. As a result, teaching and learning are good, the school's overall examination performance is rising and students with special needs make good progress. However, while students' achievement is good overall it is not yet strong enough across the board. The headteacher and senior managers have created a sense of purpose and a focus on raising students' achievement. Sustainable growth shows that the school's capacity to improve further is good. The rising standards and sound financial recovery plan mean that the school provides satisfactory value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Achievement in English, modern languages, history, geography and music is good.
- The school's status as an Engineering College is starting to improve provision but standards achieved in mathematics, science and design and technology are not high enough.
- Provision for information and communication technology is unsatisfactory and standards are below average.
- Good teaching means that overall students learn well.
- The school is led and managed well but the pace of development of some priorities is not fast enough.
- The range of vocational courses is limited and does not meet the needs of all students, especially boys.
- Very good provision for students' social and moral development and good relationships mean that students have positive attitudes to school and behave well.
- The accommodation is poor: in some subjects this is a barrier to learning.
- The quality of care for students is very good.

Improvement since the last inspection in March 1999 is satisfactory. However, over the last three or four years the school has made good progress in a number of critical areas. Standards are rising, teaching and learning have improved, and students' behaviour is good. Most of the issues identified at the last inspection have been tackled effectively. Standards in English, for example, have improved substantially. However, information and communication technology and the accommodation remain unsatisfactory. Time is still wasted moving between the two main buildings.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

| Performance compared with: |                                 | all schools |      |      | similar schools |
|----------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------|------|------|-----------------|
|                            |                                 | 2002        | 2003 | 2004 | 2004            |
| Year 11                    | GCSE/GNVQ examinations          | D           | B    | B    | B               |
| Year 13                    | A/AS level and VCE examinations | E           | E    | 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' achievements are improving and are now **good** overall. This improvement is particularly clear in Years 10 and 11 where students make good progress and achieve well. Students with special needs, and those who are learning to speak English, also achieve well.

The table above shows that performance in the 2004 GCSE examinations is above average. Results are improving. A look at the detail shows that in the last two years more students gained at least five good GCSE grades than in other schools: results are rising faster than the national picture. However, 15 students did not gain any GCSEs at all and boys do not do as well as girls.

At the end of Year 9, the SATs' results are broadly average. Again, a closer look at the detail shows some variations. English results are good while mathematics and science are average. In the sixth form, performance in AS and A-level is below average. However, inspection evidence shows that standards are rising and that students achieve satisfactorily overall.

Evidence from the inspection supports the figures: students' achievements are good overall and they reach standards that are broadly above average. In English, history, geography, music and modern languages students achieve well and reach good standards. On the other hand achievement is satisfactory in mathematics, science and design and technology and standards are average. Difficulties recruiting teachers for these subjects have held back improvements but things are now beginning to get better. In information and communication technology standards in Years 7 to 11 are below average and students under-perform. This is because the teaching programme is limited and there are few occasions where students use computers. In the sixth form achievement is satisfactory overall but improving standards mean that more subjects are now good.

Students' personal qualities are **good**. They develop their social and moral awareness very well and their spiritual development is good. Students have positive attitudes to learning and most have established good working relationships with their peer groups and with their teachers. Students enjoy school and are enthusiastic about the range of activities on offer. Behaviour is good around the school and in most lessons. Attendance is sound in the main school but not good enough in the sixth form.

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION

Taking everything together students get a **sound** education. Teaching and learning are **good**. Most students are well motivated, have positive attitudes to learning and take their work seriously. Teaching is particularly strong in Years 10 and 11: this is why achievement in Years 10 and 11 is good. What makes teaching strong are the good quality planning and the positive relationships that teachers have with their students. As a result students have positive attitudes to learning and most work hard.

The curriculum is satisfactory overall. The legal requirements for teaching information and communication technology are not being met in full but the plans to rectify this are sound. The sixth form curriculum is also satisfactory overall. There are not enough courses that cater for the needs of those students who find an academic curriculum difficult, particularly boys. The plans to improve the curriculum are good but have yet to have an impact on achievement. One of the real successes of the school is work done to recruit and hold on to staff. This is one of the main reasons why teaching, learning and achievement are improving. The accommodation is unsatisfactory but there are sensible plans to improve the facilities. The need to move between the two different buildings means that students arrive late to some lessons. This limits achievement in some classes.

The school provides a good range of enrichment and out of school activities that extend students' learning well. All subjects are encouraged to provide after school activities and a good number of students are involved. There is effective support and guidance for students and the way the school prepares students for Year 7 and the sixth form are very good. Support for students with special needs and those who are learning to speak English are good. The school has good links with other schools and colleges and with the community. These contribute well to students' personal development and achievement. The partnership with parents is good.

## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are **good**. One of the main reasons is the headteacher's influential vision for the school and her commitment to involving everyone in its work. Good planning is helping to raise the quality of the school's work but for some developments the rate of progress is not fast enough. The good opportunities for professional development have improved teaching and built the school's capacity to manage change. As a result the school is in a strong position to consolidate its achievements and to improve further. Governance is satisfactory. Governors are committed to the school's improvement and have a good understanding of its strengths and

weaknesses. Most statutory requirements are met except those for information and communication technology.

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

Parents are positive and supportive and the school has an improving reputation in the community. Those parents who attended the meeting with inspectors before the inspection were very upbeat about the school. Attendance at open evenings is often very good. Most students are also positive about the school and their opinions and concerns are dealt with well through the school council and by an annual questionnaire.

## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

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

- Improve the standards achieved in information and communication technology and in mathematics, science and design and technology;
- Improve the attendance in the sixth form;
- Broaden the range of vocational courses for students in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form;
- Accelerate the rate of progress in tackling the school's weaknesses by ensuring that development plans identify sharp and measurable targets;
- Improve the quality of the accommodation and reduce the movement between the two buildings;

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- Improve the provision of ICT.

## The Sixth Form

### OVERALL EVALUATION

**The sixth form is reasonably effective and cost-effective.** Standards are rising. AS and A-level performance is similar to the last inspection but the evidence on the ground shows that students' achievements are improving. This is because teaching is good overall. However, some students' absence rate is quite high and lessens their achievements. The provision in the majority of the subjects inspected is good. There is a wide choice of AS and A-level courses but a limited range of vocational courses means that the needs of all students are not met fully.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Good teaching is helping to improve standards and achievement: overall performance remains below average but achievement is sound.
- Leadership and management are good and this is helping to improve teaching and raise standards.
- Attendance is unsatisfactory and this limits the rate of improvement in achievement.
- Students have good attitudes to school and receive good support and advice.

### 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>Good in English.</b> Standards are improving as a result of greater staff stability and consistently good teaching and learning.   |
| Mathematics                               | <b>Satisfactory.</b> Students are taught with accuracy and enthusiasm but they do not play an active part in the lessons.   |
| Science                                   | <b>Very good in chemistry.</b> Very good teaching means that students achieve well.   |
| Information and communication technology  | <b>Good.</b> Standards in GCE A-level are above average but below average at AS-level. Good teaching, planning and organisation mean that achievement is good.                              |
| Humanities                                | <b>Good in psychology.</b> Students achieve well. Teaching and learning are good.<br><b>Good in history.</b> Standards are average but students achieve well because teaching is good.      |
| Engineering, technology and manufacturing | <b>Satisfactory in design and technology.</b> Teaching and learning are good overall.   |
| Visual and performing arts and media      | <b>Good in art and design.</b> Students make good progress from Year 12 to Year 13 and standards are above national expectations.   |
| Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel   | <b>Good in physical education.</b> Good teaching ensures that students achieve well consistently, and successfully complete the courses they start.   |
| Business                                  | <b>Good.</b> Students achieve well at A-level as a result of good teaching and learning and effective management. Students achieve less well at AVCE mainly as a result of poor attendance. |

*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

Students receive good advice, guidance and support. Students' progress is tracked very effectively and the level of care is good. The arrangements for applying for courses in the sixth form are

valued highly by students and the induction programme is very effective. There is a good range of AS and A-level courses but vocational opportunities are more limited. However, there are good plans to change the curriculum to better cater for those students whose GCSE achievements are modest. Sixth form students are involved in a range of links with other schools and the community which promote their personal development well.

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

Leadership and management are **good**. As a result the quality of the sixth form is improving and standards are rising. Key staff with responsibility for the sixth form carry out their work effectively. There are good arrangements for monitoring the work of the sixth form and the views of students through the school council help to identify general issues or concerns. The school has a good understanding of the sixth form's strengths and weaknesses. Overall performance is evaluated well and the information is used to identify where improvements are needed. This is one of the reasons why A-level results are improving.

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

Students are generally positive about the school and the sixth form. They are particularly pleased with the arrangements for moving from Year 11 into Year 12 and they value the advice provided by teachers. The great majority of students enjoy being in the sixth form and feel they have made the right choice to stay on at school.

## PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS

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

Overall, students' achievement is good, particularly in Years 10 and 11. Taking all the subjects together, GCSE results are above average and compare well with similar schools. Examination and test results have improved over the last two years and are rising faster than they are nationally. Difficulties in recruiting teachers have hampered improvement in some subjects where standards remain average and achievement satisfactory.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well in English, modern languages, history, geography and music in Years 7 to 11.
- Standards and achievement in information and communication are too low.
- Achievement in mathematics, science and design and technology are only satisfactory.
- Some groups of boys, and those who find traditional subjects difficult, do not do as well as they should.

#### Commentary

##### Main school

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

| Standards in: | School results | National results |
|---------------|----------------|------------------|
| English       | 34.3 (31.9)    | 33.4 (33.3)      |
| mathematics   | 35.9 (34.9)    | 35.4 (34.7)      |
| science       | 33.6 (32.7)    | 33.6 (33.3)      |

*There were 234 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year. 2004 figures are unavailable.*

#### *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  | 61 (58)        | 52 (52)          |
| Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-G grades  | 91 (95)        | 89 (88)          |
| Percentage of students gaining 1 or more A*-G grades  | 94 (98)        | 96 (96)          |
| Average point score per student (best eight subjects) | 43.2 (43.7)    | 41.4 (40.6)      |

*There were 241 students in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

1. Students' achievements have improved and are now good overall. This improvement is particularly clear in Years 10 and 11 where students make good progress. In Years 7 to 9 achievement is not quite as good but there is also clear evidence of improvement particularly in English. Overall, the results of 2004 Year 9 national tests are average.

2. A closer look at the 2004 data shows that:

- Results are improving: in the last two years more students gained at least five good GCSE passes than in other schools.
- In 2004 a relatively large proportion of students did not gain any GCSEs at all.
- Boys do not do as well as girls in GCSE.
- In the Year 9 national tests students did well in English, where the results were above average, but achieved only satisfactory results in mathematics and science.

3. Evidence from the inspection supports the data: standards are rising and by the time students are able to leave school their achievements are good overall. Some boys do not do as well as they should. Much of the reason for this is that there are few courses designed to meet the needs of those who are not motivated by traditional subjects. However, the school have begun to tackle this effectively: gaining engineering college status and individual programmes for Year 11 students are examples of the school's work to raise the achievement of those most at risk of failing.

4. In English, history, geography, music and modern languages students achieve well and reach above the average standards. In mathematics, science and design and technology students' achievements are satisfactory and they attain average standards. Over the past three years or so it has not been easy to recruit teachers or to keep experienced staff, an issue noted by parents. This has led to difficulties in ensuring consistency in the quality of teaching particularly, but not exclusively, in subjects such as mathematics, science and design and technology. As a result, this has held back improvements in standards achieved in these subjects. However, the school's professional development programme is becoming increasingly successful in recruiting new teachers and retaining experienced staff. As a result, achievement is improving: in science, for example, more students in Years 10 and 11 are on track to achieve the higher GCSE grades than in previous years.

5. Standards in information and communication technology in Years 7 to 11 are below average. Students' achievements are too low and they under-perform. This is because there are too few opportunities for students to develop their skills and understanding in using computers. There are two main reasons for this: the limited teaching programme and an under-investment in buying new computers. As a result students' access to computers and opportunities to use information and communication technology to support their work in subjects are curtailed.

6. Students learning English as an additional language make good gains in their acquisition of English. As a result they are able to cope well in other subjects. Although the school does not analyse examination results by speakers of other languages, a breakdown by ethnicity indicates that students whose home language may not be English mostly achieve as well as others at the school.

7. Students with special needs make good progress because they are well supported in their subjects. Those who are taken out of lessons for extra help with English and mathematics are taught well. Data that track students' progress over time shows that many make good gains in reading levels and spelling competence. Indeed, some students improve very significantly in a short period of time. Performance data indicate that students with special needs achieve at least as well as others at the school: the school adds value to their learning.

## **Sixth form**

8. In the sixth form standards are improving. Although standards are below average students achieve satisfactorily overall given their attainment when they start Year 12. While many students start the sixth form with a range of good GCSE grades there are some who only just meet, or sometimes just miss, the entry requirements. What this means is that this latter group can find traditional AS and A-level courses difficult and their performance in examinations suffers. This explains the below average results at the end of Year 13. However, there are two important points: first, many students do well in the sixth form; second, the school has good plans to amend the curriculum to provide a broader range of courses that cater for those whose GCSE achievements are modest.

### **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 | 81.6 (83.2)    | 92.4 (92.3)      |
| Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades | 24.6 (21.0)    | 36.2 (35.6)      |
| Average point score per student          | 213.2 (188.0)  | 265.2 (258.2)    |

*There were 89 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year*

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

Students feel confident and secure in school and have positive attitudes to learning. Most have established good working relationships with their peer groups and with their teachers. They enjoy school and are enthusiastic about the range of activities on offer. Overall, behaviour is very good around the school and in most lessons. Provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Students' attitudes to learning and to the range of activities offered by the school are positive.
- Students' social and moral development is very good.
- Relationships are good which creates an atmosphere within which students feel confident and secure.
- Behaviour is usually very good and there are few instances of bullying or racist behaviour.

### **Commentary**

#### **Main school**

9. The school has succeeded in creating an environment in which teachers work closely with students to help them achieve their full potential through a range of learning activities. The school promotes positive attitudes and good behaviour through its strong Catholic ethos, which permeates every aspect of school life. The majority of students enjoy school and most take part in the wide range of extra activities on offer. Students have, on the whole, a positive view of the school with only very few exceptions. They are considerate and helpful to one another during lessons.

10. Relationships are good and the general atmosphere around the school is pleasant, good-humoured and polite. Students move around the narrow corridors in a manner that is considerate and demonstrates awareness of the needs of others. There are few examples of pushing or shoving and students maintain that there is little bullying. Behaviour is usually good in lessons, but occasionally can be less so when lessons are not well constructed or when management of students is not good. On occasions a minority of students in Years 8 and 9 can disengage and become disruptive if given the opportunity.

11. In subjects such as science, art and history, students are willing to take responsibility, regardless of their capability, and enjoy being enterprising with those teachers who are confident enough to give them the opportunity to work with some degree of independence. Students have a positive view of most subjects, of their peers and of their teachers. They work in a mature fashion, in pairs and in small groups and are very supportive of one another. Most display a high level of self-esteem during lessons.

12. The school has high expectations that students will behave in a mature and responsible manner towards one another. The work of the Behaviour for Learning working party has led to changes to classroom procedures by ensuring that there is a more even distribution of boys and girls. The detailed behaviour policy is linked helpfully to the school development plan: the

improvements to behaviour and teaching show that this is having a positive impact on students' learning.

13. Provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall. There is good provision for spiritual development. Lessons begin with prayer and form times and assemblies create space for meaningful acts of collective worship. Effective retreats are held. But opportunities for spiritual development are not picked up in lessons across the curriculum very widely, so that students are not encouraged to reflect on the non-material aspects of life to any extent. Notable exceptions are in English, where the study of tragedy and fate in set texts is dealt with confidently, and in history, where martyrdom and religious conflict are considered along with topics such as the growth of Islam and the Holocaust. Departmental audits show that some are not fully aware of what it means to create opportunities for spiritual development.

14. Provision for moral development is very good. Students clearly know the principles of right and wrong, and this is reflected in the good behaviour of the majority. They get involved in fund-raising, making impressive contributions to charity. Moral and social issues are discussed in lessons. The social development of students is also very good. The sixth form undertake community service both in school at side-by-side reading and also in local primary schools. There is a peer-mentoring scheme in operation between year groups. The Community Action Task Force operates all year round litter picking in the adjacent street. There is a school council as well as form and year meetings where student voices can be heard although some students feel that they are not involved enough in supporting the work of the school. Inspection evidence shows that students do have a voice but that many concerns are about accommodation to which it is difficult for the school to respond positively.

15. Provision for cultural development is satisfactory. There are school visits and opportunities for development in the arts, but no more than is found in most schools. There is not a particularly strong emphasis on other cultures, apart from where syllabuses require this, such as the study of poems from other cultures in GCSE English. There are students in the school from a wide range of ethnic and cultural backgrounds, but the diversity is not celebrated to any great extent.

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

| Authorised absence |     | Unauthorised absence |     |
|--------------------|-----|----------------------|-----|
| School data        | 8.1 | School data          | 0.9 |
| 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.*

16. Attendance has shown a gradual improvement over the last three years and is now close to the national average. Effective registration and prompt use of "truancy call" provide good accurate daily information. Planned improvements to lesson registration will better detect truancy and lateness to lessons.

17. There is good daily monitoring and regular follow up of absence. The school works effectively in partnership with the Education Welfare Service and the introduction of "fast track panels" are beginning to have an impact on parentally condoned absence. The school takes a firm line with term time holidays and is raising awareness of good attendance through the "Raising Achievement" agenda. A small number of students in all year groups have unsatisfactory attendance and staff make good individual arrangements to encourage improvement.

18. Punctuality is unsatisfactory and too many students arrive late to lessons. Movement between the two sites is often leisurely resulting in as much as ten minutes less time in the lesson and this has a negative impact on standards and achievement.

**Exclusions**

**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                                     | 768                    | 48                                | 2                              |
| White – Irish                                       | 93                     | 8                                 | 0                              |
| White – any other White background                  | 108                    | 6                                 | 1                              |
| Mixed – White and Black Caribbean                   | 25                     | 3                                 | 0                              |
| Mixed – White and Black African                     | 11                     | 2                                 | 0                              |
| Mixed – White and Asian                             | 30                     | 0                                 | 0                              |
| Mixed – any other mixed background                  | 17                     | 0                                 | 0                              |
| Asian or Asian British – Indian                     | 65                     | 3                                 | 0                              |
| Asian or Asian British – Pakistani                  | 13                     | 1                                 | 0                              |
| Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi                | 4                      | 0                                 | 0                              |
| Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background | 3                      | 2                                 | 0                              |
| Black or Black British – Caribbean                  | 51                     | 10                                | 1                              |
| Black or Black British – African                    | 45                     | 3                                 | 0                              |
| Black or Black British – any other Black background | 14                     | 1                                 | 0                              |
| Chinese   | 16                     | 0                                 | 0                              |
| Any other ethnic group                              | 57                     | 4                                 | 2                              |
| No ethnic group recorded                            | 21                     | 0                                 | 0                              |

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

19. There are few racial incidents in the school and those that do occur are dealt with very promptly. The school has produced clear policy statements that are concerned with behaviour, racist incidents, bullying and harassment. The “Anti-harassment Policy” states very clearly that the intention is “to create a Christ-centred learning community where individuals are enabled to fulfil their potential”. It outlines the procedures that should be followed when any of the above incidents are reported. Ultimately, these can lead to permanent or fixed-period exclusions. Permanent exclusions only occur in those instances when there is severe breakdown in behaviour that is well beyond the boundaries that have been set by the school. These are recorded effectively and the school analyses the information by ethnicity, gender, period of exclusion and the reason for the exclusion. As behaviour has improved over time, so the number of exclusions has fallen. In 2004 – 2005 the number of fixed-term exclusions for both boys and girls has fallen significantly when compared with the figures for 2003-2004. There have been no permanent exclusions this year. This is a very good record: the strategies adopted by the school are having a positive impact on behaviour.

**Sixth form**

20. Attendance is unsatisfactory. A quarter of students attend for less than 90 per cent, although those students receiving the education maintenance award attend well. Currently not all Year 12 students attend morning registration as required. The planned introduction of electronic lesson registration is intended to improve attendance and raise achievement.

21. Students in the sixth form have a positive view of the range of activities on offer to them, which is reflected in the growing number of students who apply to enter the sixth form. They feel confident and secure and like the fact that they are given much greater autonomy and freedom to

act independently. All students spoken to said that they feel relaxed and comfortable in school. They maintained that the common room was important in that it enabled them to mix socially with their peers, to build relationships in an environment that was separate from the rest of the school.

22. Students stated that there were few instances of bullying or racial incidents in the sixth form. They feel that behaviour is good and relationships between student and student and between teachers and students are very good. They say that there is at least one adult in the school to whom they can refer if they are experiencing difficulties with work or on a personal level. They also feel that they have a responsibility to act as role models for students lower down the school.

23. Students feel that they are well supported by their teachers and tutors who make regular enquiries about progress and offer suggestions as to how work can be improved. Specific targets for improvement are set on "target days" which occur twice a year. They are encouraged by most teachers to acquire those skills that will enable them to work independently, away from the school environment. They say they were given good careers advice by the Connexions officer before joining the sixth form.

24. Although there is a school council, many sixth form students do not feel that their views are sought or that they are consulted when important decisions are taken. They do not feel that the council is sufficiently well established to enable them to play an active role in the life of the school. They would like to see it operating much more effectively which would allow them to participate more fully in the decision-making process.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL**

The quality of education is satisfactory overall. Teaching and learning are good especially in Years 10 and 11. The curriculum in both the main school and the sixth form is satisfactory but is extended well by a good range of out of school activities. These are supported well by students. There is effective support and guidance for students including those with special needs or new to learning English. There are good links with other schools and colleges, and with the community. The partnership with parents is good.

### **Teaching and learning**

Teaching and learning are good. The majority of the teaching across the school and in the sixth form is good or very good and this helps students learn well.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teaching in Years 10 and 11 is consistently good.
- Lessons are well planned and structured so that students know what is expected and get the most out of their lessons.
- The relationships between teachers and students are good. As a result students have positive attitudes to learning and mostly work hard.
- Teachers are often enthusiastic experts in their subject and this motivates students and keeps them interested.
- Assessment is good and is used well to help plan and organise lessons.

## Commentary

### Main school

#### *Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 184 lessons*

| Excellent | Very good | Good     | Satisfactory | Unsatisfactory | Poor | Very Poor |
|-----------|-----------|----------|--------------|----------------|------|-----------|
| 2 (1%)    | 39 (21%)  | 82 (45%) | 50 (27%)     | 11 (6%)        | 0    | 0         |

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

25. Teaching and learning are good overall. About two-thirds of the teaching is at least good and most students are motivated well, have positive attitudes to learning and take their work seriously. Teaching is particularly strong in Years 10 and 11 where over a fifth is very good and sometimes excellent. The quality of teaching seen in Spanish was consistently very good. This is why students make good progress during their GCSE years. One of the main reasons for the good teaching is the good opportunities for professional development. Another is the school's success in recruiting and retaining staff.

26. There are a number of characteristics that make teaching strong: the good quality planning; teachers' enthusiasm for, and knowledge of, their subject; and the positive relationships that teachers have with their students.

27. Most teachers have a good understanding of their subject and are skilful at using this to set work that challenges and stretches students' thinking. This helps to ensure that students are motivated by their work and that it takes their learning forward. Often, teachers are not just knowledgeable about their subject they are also enthusiasts and pass this on to their students well. This is what makes many lessons interesting and enjoyable: as a result students concentrate, work hard and learn well. This enthusiasm also contributes to the good relationships between teachers and students. Students value the expertise of their teachers and teachers respect their students. This is one of the reasons why students have positive attitudes to learning and mostly work hard. On the other hand students can be unforgiving when lessons are dull or poorly managed. Where this is the case students become bored and chat which disturbs learning and progress suffers.

28. Lessons are planned carefully so that there is a clear structure to the work. Tasks are often broken down into short manageable chunks so that the work can be absorbed easily by students. In many subjects the national strategy for Years 7 to 9 is used effectively to plan and organise lessons. This is the case in, for example, English, information and communication technology, geography and music, where clear learning objectives ensure that students know what is expected of them. Short starter activities, a focus on subject vocabulary and round-up sessions that help teachers check what has been learnt all add to the way lessons are organised to get the most out of the time available. Sometimes this level of organisation has a downside and results in an over-rigid approach to teaching. Lesson plans tend to be followed rigidly rather than being adapted to take account of students' responses to the work. This cautiousness sometimes means that the chance to follow students' interests, or build on their ideas, is missed.

29. Overall, assessment is good. In most subjects teachers use the information they have about students' strengths and weaknesses to set them targets to aim for in the future. In many cases this provides a good focus for students on improving their achievement. Sometimes, however, students receive too little information about what they need to do to move up from one grade or level to the next. While procedures are generally good, and contribute well to students' learning, they are not always consistent and can depend on individual teachers.

30. The teaching of those students with special needs is good. The targets included in their individual education plans are used by teachers effectively to keep students engaged with their learning. In small-group withdrawal sessions, good questioning by the teacher enables students to recognise and build on what they have learnt previously. The use of a computerised learning

programme, which students access individually three times per week, has brought significant benefits to those with weaknesses in basic skills.

31. Students at the very early stages of learning English are withdrawn for specific language tuition which provides a sound basis for them to develop their understanding. In-class support is provided by a teacher who knows individual students, and their language backgrounds, very well. Sitting alongside students explaining the lesson and checking for understanding enables them to make connections between written and spoken English. As a result of this support, students are able to take a full part in lessons and make good progress.

32. At the time of the inspection there were five Traveller students on roll, although only four actually attend school. No specific funding is provided for them but the LEA makes support available through its ethnic minority achievement service so that they receive some in-class assistance, help with reading and benefit from targeted teaching on a withdrawal basis. Few Traveller students stay at the school long enough to be entered for examinations.

### **Sixth form**

33. Teaching in the sixth form is good and as a result most students learn well. As with the main school teachers have a good knowledge of their subject and pass on their enthusiasm effectively. For the most part, teachers have good relationships with their students. However, in one or two lessons, less positive relationships meant that teaching was not effective in promoting engagement and motivation and learning was limited. But most lessons are at least good and effective lesson planning means that students are set work that stretches their thinking.

### **The curriculum**

Curriculum provision is satisfactory overall. Most legal requirements are met except those for teaching information and communication technology. The range of GCSE subjects is good but limited vocational courses means that not all students' needs are met, particularly of those who find an academic curriculum difficult. The range of out of school activities is good.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The curriculum is insufficiently broad to meet the needs of all the students.
- The good range of activities and additional opportunities for learning outside school hours have a positive impact on students' personal development and achievement.
- There are limited opportunities to use information and communication technology across the subjects of the curriculum.
- The accommodation is poor and limits achievements in some subjects.
- The school has worked successfully to recruit new staff and keep those who are already in post.

### **Commentary**

#### **Main school**

34. For the most part the curriculum meets the legal requirements for teaching subjects. In Years 7, 8 and 9 the arrangements for teaching information and communication technology are not working effectively. Insufficient access to reliable computers means that learning is somewhat limited in many subjects in Years 7 to 9. As a result students do not get enough time to develop their skills in using computers. The curriculum is extended satisfactorily for those students in Years 8 and 9 that follow a course that is designed to promote thinking skills. However, the work is not always challenging enough. As a result its impact on raising achievement tends to be limited.

35. In Years 10 and 11 the curricular provision is satisfactory. The way the curriculum is arranged provides a reasonably wide choice and ensures that the needs and aspirations of the

majority of students are met. However, there are two aspects where there are some weaknesses. At present, there are few non-academic courses that meet the needs of those students who find the more traditional academic course difficult or uninteresting. This is not to say that the school is not catering for these students: one student, for example, is gaining a very good experience through a link with the local college and a small number of students attend local colleges for courses in engineering and construction. However, the engineering course is not successful and is to be stopped. The only vocational course offered by the school is ICT at GNVQ level and this does not provide a clear enough route for all of the less academic students as they move through Years 10 and 11 and into the sixth form. The positive side of this is that the school has identified this as an area it needs to tackle. Some well thought-out plans have been presented to senior managers but at the time of writing are still not agreed.

36. The school has reviewed the impact of the curriculum on student achievement and has plans to improve the curriculum through the use of national strategies, especially the Year 7 to 9 Strategy, and the introduction of some innovations, chiefly linked to the engineering college initiative. Currently there are suitable plans to develop more vocational courses for students to follow from age 14 to 19.

37. The curriculum is planned appropriately to ensure smooth transition from primary to secondary experiences. Students are well prepared for their transition into post sixteen work or further education. This is well supported by careers advice both as part of the PSHE programme and as individual student interviews. Target setting days are effectively used to help fine tune the curriculum in line with students' potential achievement and aspirations. The split site does lead to a loss of curriculum time for those subjects that have students cross between the two sites and this has also led to duplication of resources in some subjects.

38. The school has had some difficulty in recruiting and retaining well-trained staff but this is being overcome effectively by the introduction of a range of successful measures. These include enhanced training opportunities for staff and the development of a stronger sense of identity and community spirit. This has been fostered by the development of a collegiate approach to whole-school development with staff being given the opportunity to participate and engage in action based approaches to school improvement. The MA in Education course, which is being run in conjunction with St Mary's College, is proving particularly popular and successful. Improved staff morale, the greater stability of staff and improving achievement show the impact of these initiatives. Staff, who are new to teaching or new to the school, confirm that there are good opportunities to develop their expertise and understand the particular needs of students. The school has a strong commitment to training and staff are clear about their development opportunities. Their procedures include an effective evaluation process that is used to inform future planning.

39. The school provides a good range of enrichment and extra-curricular activities and all subjects are expected to take part in the extra-curricular provision. The annual activity days are a significant feature of the school's provision and provide a wide range of experiences including: Spanish tapas making, fencing and various theatre trips. There is also a wide range of day and residential trips which enhance the academic curriculum and develop character and personal skills. These include theatre visits, a residential fieldtrip and the Duke of Edinburgh award. A particularly effective feature is the wide range of workshops outside the normal school day to support examination courses: these have a positive impact on raising the level of achievement. A number of subjects run extension classes for gifted and talented students. Students recognise the helpful nature of this support and attendance at these activities is good, as seen during the inspection at the after school history club.

40. A wide range of activities also includes over 10 different sports after school including rugby and trampolining and there is active participation in inter-school competitions. The music department runs a strings group and a choir and the art department offers a well attended weekly art club. The school responds well to students' demand so there are an ever changing variety of activities.

41. Resources for learning are unsatisfactory in a number of subjects. The accommodation is poor. The better facilities include the upper and lower school learning resource centres and the indoor sports facilities. The outdoor facilities for physical education are poor. In other departments teaching rooms are sometimes small and in a poor condition. Some classrooms are too small for the number of students. The school has invested in technology for teaching but departments lack basic resources for teaching and learning. A majority of subject departments have limited access to computers to support teaching and learning. The arrangements at lunchtime are unsatisfactory: there are no proper dining facilities on either site. Student movement between sites and during lesson changeover on each site is unsatisfactory. Lessons starts are delayed because of the travelling between sites and difficulty with movement between lessons.

### **Sixth form**

42. The sixth form curriculum is satisfactory. The school provides all students with a wide choice of GCE AS and A2 courses and a good range of opportunities for extending learning beyond the normal school day. There is a limited range of vocational courses which does limit the curriculum provision for the less academic and is out of step with the school's open access policy to sixth form entry.

43. There is an increasing number of work related courses and courses accessible at different levels. The school is a CISCO academy and offers an AVCE in information and communication technology.

44. Students have many opportunities to enrich their learning and broaden their minds outside the classroom. A wide and varied programme of additional activities is available to them. Drama productions and choirs provide many creative opportunities. Many positions of responsibility, themed residential retreats, field studies, theatre trips and clubs also greatly extend student learning and contribute significantly to raising standards and producing well-rounded citizens. All sixth formers are expected to give something back to the school and the wider community as part of the community service programme that offers a variety of opportunities from voluntary work in the local community to assisting students in the lower school.

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

The school provides effective support and guidance for its students. Students' views are sought and acted upon and procedures for the induction into Year 7 and also into the sixth form are very good.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The tracking of students' academic and personal development is strong and lies at the heart of everything the school attempts to do.
- Directors of study, their assistants and form tutors work hard to gain a full picture of the whole student.
- Induction arrangements and the involvement of parents are very effective in helping students new to the school and applying for the sixth form to settle down quickly.
- There are very effective strategies in place to support sixth formers applying for courses in higher education.
- There are some inconsistencies in the regularity and quality of feedback in subjects.

## **Commentary**

### **Main school**

45. The school takes the induction of its students seriously and the process begins in Year 5 in the primary school, when students begin to learn about what Douay Martyrs can offer them. There are school visits, taster days and prospective Year 7 students have an opportunity to meet their form tutors prior to their entering the school. There are meetings for parents too, when they receive more detailed information about the school curriculum and the procedures for ensuring that the progress of their children is monitored. There is a staged arrival for Year 7 students on their first day and also an early parents' evening to make sure that all parties are aware of progress.

46. Pastoral staff, including directors of study and form tutors, emphasise the need to assess the progress of their youngsters in all elements of school life and, to this end, there is a regular and very effective tracking system to identify underachievement, to celebrate success in all its forms and to set targets for improvement. Students are grateful for the detailed advice they receive on their academic performance in particular, but they recognise that the quality of comment is sometimes inconsistent. There is also a professional counsellor who visits the school on three-and-a-half days per week and also other outside staff who support students in other areas, anger management for example. The school chaplaincy team has a high profile in school and students speak positively of its support and advice.

47. Students at risk of exclusion visit the Aquinas Centre. Careers guidance is good and this is the second year that students in Year 7 have benefited from its curriculum. Connexions staff interview each student and those in Year receive detailed letters on the outcomes of each session and also the agreed action plans for the future. Careers fairs are a strong element of this programme. Students' achievements are supported through the school's *Premier League* programme, where they work together in teams to improve their levels of achievement and commitment.

48. The school works has established an effective peer tutoring system where sixth formers support students in Year 11 and Year 10 students work with those in Year 9. Mentors are trained well to support other students. Moreover, the school works effectively to address the opinions and concerns of its students through the school council and also by an annual questionnaire.

49. The school complies very well with the national expectations for child protection. A designated senior manager keeps the "at-risk" register in secure conditions, and closely monitors the progress of students who may be on that list. The school is vigilant and quickly notices when students cause concern. All teachers are fully aware of the procedures to be followed when child protection issues may arise.

50. Personal learning targets are clearly stated in students' individual education plans. These help to keep the focus on aspects of work that students find most difficult. The teaching programme is overseen by a learning support assistant who monitors students' progress and maintains records of attendance and punctuality. An appropriate emphasis is placed on raising standards of reading and successful strategies such as the side-by-side reading scheme ensure that students who need practice and support with their reading are helped both at home and at school.

### **Sixth form**

51. Induction arrangements for prospective students applying for advanced courses are very effective and begin early in Year 11, when heads of academic departments give information on course content and methods of assessment. This 11 into 12 programme is valued highly by students. There are now plans for students to visit sixth-form lessons in order for them to sample sixth-form study at first hand. Because the school places emphasis on the openness of its sixth form, it is now beginning to amend its curriculum, in order to meet the needs of all.

52. The tracking of student progress is very effective and takes place on a regular basis. Those in danger of underachievement are interviewed on an individual basis and both pastoral and academic staff are directly involved in setting targets for future performance. Connexions plays an important role here, too, and students applying for jobs are given good advice on the qualifications and qualities needed for success. The Connexions library in the learning resource centre is well stocked and frequently used.

53. Teachers place great emphasis on working with sixth formers to raise their aspirations for further study. To this end, selected students are encouraged to apply for the more prestigious universities and visits to relevant open days arranged. Moreover, those applying for Oxford and Cambridge receive further support and take part in mock interviews to inform them of what to expect when they visit the college of their choice. On results day, students whose performance does not lead to automatic university entry are supported very effectively by teachers and, as a result, most gain a place through the clearing house scheme.

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

The school's partnership with parents is good. Links with schools, colleges and the community are good and contribute well to personal development and achievement.

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

- Parents are positive and supportive.
- The school provides very good information and opportunities for parents to discuss progress and other issues.
- Good links with the main feeder primaries have a very positive impact on transfer and the training of graduate teachers, however curriculum links are underdeveloped.
- Strong links with the parishes enhance the outreach of the school into the community.
- Links with local further education (FE) colleges are good and improving.
- The school has established good links with business especially in relation to the school's Engineering College status.

#### **Commentary**

##### **Main school**

54. The school has a good working partnership with parents. Parents are positive and supportive and the school has an improving reputation in the community. Attendance at the prospective parents' open evening was very good and attendance is good at other information sessions and the target setting days. During the inspection, nearly all of Year 9 parents attended the options evening and Careers Fair and were warmly welcomed by staff.

55. The school provides very good information to parents, both written and through a good range of other meetings. Good use is made of the planner, which conveys useful information to and from home. Annual reports have recently been revised and provide parents with very clear data and detail, although they do not meet requirements for information and communication technology. They are very well supplemented with short reports discussed at the two target setting days when parents and students meet with form tutors.

56. Parents' views are surveyed annually and their views help shape developments. The Friends of the Douay Martyrs arrange a number of social events in the community and make a supportive and valuable financial contribution to departmental resources. Staff are readily accessible and concerns are dealt with effectively.

57. Good links with the four main Catholic feeder schools and the local parishes support effective parental links and very good transfer arrangements. The parish priests are regular visitors and provide very good support and outreach into the community.

58. The school has developed good working links with the Hillingdon Catholic Schools Forum, particularly in joint training initiatives. Links with other local schools and curriculum links overall are underdeveloped.

59. There are good links with local further education colleges for work related learning. The partnership for work related learning is being strengthened to improve the impact on achievement. The school works effectively with external agencies, FE colleges, higher education institutions and adult education to provide wider learning opportunities. There are also good links with higher education through the Graduate Teacher Programme and with St Mary's College as part of the school-based MA programme.

60. Links with business and industry are good and developing well with the new engineering status. The school is working very effectively with the Education Business Partnership and several sponsors, although the impact on standards and achievement is limited and still developing. Good wider links are used to support an effective work experience programme and vocational learning. For example, the school has a good relationship with the local army base represented at the Year 9 careers fair, which supports good learning and personal development.

### **Sixth form**

61. Links with parents are good in the sixth form and they are well informed about the students' progress. However some parents do not ensure good attendance. Good links with the community are fostered effectively by sixth form students doing community service: this work promotes students' personal development well. Good links with external agencies and colleges have a good impact on post-16 transfer and personal development.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

Overall leadership and management are good. The leadership of the headteacher is good. The management and leadership of other senior managers are good, and middle leaders, some of whom are new in post, are supported very well. Governance is satisfactory. The sixth form is led and managed well: as a result provision and achievement are improving.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Good leadership is clearly focused on the development of effective teaching and raising achievement.
- Good management means the school evaluates the effectiveness of teaching and learning well: this is helping to raise students' achievements.
- The developing expertise as a training school has built capacity for school improvement well.
- The statutory requirements for the use of information and communication technology are not met for students in Years 7, 8 and 9.
- Development planning is detailed but targets are not specific enough: as a result some of the school's work lacks urgency.
- Continuing professional development, including support for student teachers, is very good.
- Work to take the development of the school's Engineering College status further is not always sharp enough.

## Commentary

### Main school

62. The headteacher and other key staff lead the school well. There is a strong commitment to developing shared leadership: the strength of this approach is evident in the good arrangements for staff development that are linked effectively to the strategic development plan for the school. Leaders and managers have invested time and resources to build capacity for school improvement. This has been done in two distinct but interwoven ways: by developing the notion of distributed responsibility where decisions are made corporately; and by using the school's status as a training school to give staff a stake in its future.

63. As a training school it has been possible to give staff the opportunity to take part in teacher – practitioner research, study for a school-based MA, and be part of both national and local leadership networks. What this has done is promote the idea that everyone has a role in leading and managing the school. Since the previous inspection there have been significant changes in leadership and management and all senior managers have a very clear focus on raising standards of teaching and learning. The headteacher's good vision underpins the work of staff and governors and this is reflected in the way that everyone is involved in planning for school development. All involved work with understanding of the challenges and have a commitment to succeed.

64. The headteacher and other staff with management responsibility work effectively together to ensure accurate identification of the strength and weaknesses of the school. The performance of teaching staff is monitored effectively and outcomes of observation are used to inform the continuous programme of improvement in the quality of teaching. As a result, and despite instability in staffing, the school has still managed to improve the quality of teaching and raise standards. The school has appointed a number of relatively inexperienced staff into posts of responsibility. They have been very well supported by the imaginative training programme and are already showing an awareness of strengths in subjects and areas for development.

65. The development of the school as an Engineering College is broadly satisfactory. The overall vision for the Engineering College at a senior level is clear and convincing. Some successful events to raise students' and parents' awareness of the school's new status have been well received. There are also some good plans for a week of activities based on technology, engineering and manufacturing as well as an annual engineering day based on activities and a competition. Gaining Engineering College status is also contributing to improvements to the accommodation and resources particularly in science and design and technology: the school has submitted detailed plans to refurbish the design and technology rooms and Government agreement is all but assured. The working group to develop key priorities for the Engineering College is beginning to make an impact on development but at subject level some action plans are not sharp enough. For example, there is little information about how the subject will contribute to curriculum development and how working to provide support and training for teachers in primary and secondary schools is to be organised. As a result, there is not as much clarity at middle management level about how the targets set out in specialist bid are to be met.

66. Development planning is sound. The detailed plans for both the school as a whole and subjects identify the right priorities and are useful tools for improvement. A strength is that there are not too many priorities and this makes the plans manageable. Another plus is that the main priorities are all focused on raising achievement: this is helping to keep everyone's eye on the important issues facing the school. Indeed, this is one of the main reasons why there is a strong sense of a shared commitment to improvement. On the other hand, the success criteria are often not specific enough and make it difficult for the school to know whether it has achieved its targets. This is one of the reasons why the pace of development for some of the school's priorities is not as fast as it might be.

67. The senior leadership group and other key post holders remain fully focused on attainment and achievement. The school has provided training and development opportunities for subject leaders to evaluate the quality of teaching and learning and eradicate underachievement. There are

clear signs that these continued efforts are making a difference. Workforce remodelling initiatives have been addressed and new staff are well supported. The headteacher and key staff have built good systems for sustainable growth. Given the level of commitment and expertise of staff, the school is now in a position to push harder on identified priorities.

68. Governance is satisfactory overall. The governing body has a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and is very supportive of the headteacher and senior leaders. Governors work effectively to hold the school to account, for example by analysing examination results each year. Governors have worked successfully with the school to achieve Engineering College status as a strategy to raise achievement and improve recruitment. The governing body meets almost all statutory responsibilities but not all students receive their full entitlement to information and communication technology. The school is aware of this and has sound plans in place to address all the issues.

69. The assistant headteacher responsible for ethnic minority achievement and the support teacher for students who speak English as an additional language have a good understanding of language learning and the needs of these students. A very useful handbook provides helpful advice, drawn from a variety of sources, for subject teachers. This gives practical suggestions about helping students who speak English as an additional language to achieve well and is widely circulated amongst staff.

70. Special educational needs are co-ordinated effectively. The small team of teachers and learning support assistants know students' needs very well and take care to adapt and utilise resources to maximise learning. The comprehensive range of documents guides practice well, including information about how students are identified, supported and assessed.

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

| Income and expenditure (£) |           | Balances (£)                        |          |
|----------------------------|-----------|-------------------------------------|----------|
| Total income               | 5,264,746 | Balance from previous year          | -162,654 |
| Total expenditure          | 5,510,718 | Balance carried forward to the next | -242,042 |
| Expenditure per student    | 4,109     |                                     |          |

71. The school's finances are now managed effectively but in the recent past increasing staff costs, and the need to expand the senior team temporarily, led to financial problems. This was the result of the difficulties in recruiting teachers: the school had to pay heavily for temporary staff to cover vacancies and this led to a deficit budget. However, the school has an appropriate recovery plan in agreement with the local education authority. This includes a planned reduction in the size of the senior leadership team. The school's recovery plan shows it will have made sufficient savings to eliminate the deficit by March 2007.

72. The school spends about twice as much as it receives for special needs support and this enables provision to be made for more students: for example, those who are underachieving in their reading, not just those who are two or more years behind. It is a mark of the school's commitment to inclusion.

#### **Sixth form**

73. The sixth form is led and managed effectively. There is a very clear commitment to raising standards in the sixth form. The analysis of data on sixth form performance is good and this used well to track individual student's progress and help to set appropriate targets. Teaching and learning are monitored carefully and used well to help improve the sixth form's provision. A recent review of the sixth form curriculum has identified the need to improve the range of courses and experiences to meet the needs a wider range of students. As a result of this work, standards are rising and achievement is improving. It is too early to say whether the changes to the curriculum are having an impact but plans are generally appropriate and represent sound development.

## OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES

### Work Related Learning

Overall provision in work related learning is **satisfactory**.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Careers education is very well planned and led.
- The range and uptake of vocational courses on the curriculum are limited.
- Work experience is very well planned and co-ordinated.
- The impact of the Engineering College status has not permeated into the work of all departments to support work related learning.

#### Commentary

74. The school's programme for work related learning (WRL) is in the process of being established, particularly in identifying and implementing national guidelines, but departments have not yet been audited to establish where they can contribute to specific areas of WRL. However, the recently established business strategy group is drawing the various strands of vocational provision, business partnerships and college links together into a coherent strategy. The teaching of the more general aspects of work related aspects is good when lessons are planned with opportunities for students to make presentations, lead sessions, work in teams and research topics. Specific aspects of WRL are covered in business studies where students learn about employment and practice interviewing as part of the GCSE, A-level and VCE courses.

75. The school is working in partnership with two local colleges to develop a programme of vocational courses for those students for whom a purely academic pathway of GCSEs is not appropriate. Students are able to study courses at the colleges in engineering, brickwork and motor vehicle maintenance and there are plans for the introduction of more. The attendance and performance of the relatively few students taking these courses is monitored with the majority of students reported as enjoying the courses and applying themselves to their work. Unfortunately, the first group of students entered in 2004 for the Applied GCSE Engineering all failed. Vocational courses in the sixth form, particularly below Level 3 are limited, and as a consequence there is currently no coherent 14-19 vocational pathway. The school is aware of this and is in the process of remodelling the school curriculum to provide for students of all abilities and aspirations. There has only been limited influence of the specialist engineering specialist college status across the work of the school and individual departments, although some subjects, including religious education, have begun to incorporate relevant themes into their schemes of work. A number of business links have been established, including working with the local Education Business Partnership, although these are not extensive.

76. Work experience is well planned, monitored and evaluated for all students in Year 10. Many students plan their own placements and where this is not successful the school works with the Education Business Partnership to ensure all are placed with an appropriate employer. The school works effectively to ensure that all placements are safe, adequately insured and lead to students having an enriching experience. Preparation of students is good. Evaluation is thorough with employers reporting that students generally work responsibly and have a good awareness of health and safety factors. Evaluation will be enhanced with the introduction of the comprehensive student diary and the participation of employers in the dedicated evaluation day. Careers education is enthusiastically led and effectively planned for all years from Year 7 onwards. This is delivered through the PSHE lessons and through good access to the new and highly regarded Connexions adviser. Teaching by the specialist careers teaching is very effective. For example, in a very good Year 11 lesson good relationships and thought-provoking questions led students to think seriously about their personal qualities and how they can be identified to inform career choices. This aspect was not reported in the last report.

## **PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING, 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**

- Test and examination results have improved significantly over the past three years and are now above the national average at GCSE and well above in Year 9 tests.
- Standards are above average and achievement is good overall.
- Teaching and learning are good.
- Leadership and management are good.
- Some aspects of the accommodation have a detrimental effect on learning.

##### **Commentary**

77. Results in the national tests for Year 9 students were well above the national average in 2004, and were significantly higher than those in similar schools. The proportion of students reaching the expected level has risen steadily over the past three years, as has the proportion reaching levels higher than expected. Results in GCSE examination results in English were above the national average in 2004 for students gaining the higher grades, A\*-C, mainly because girls performed particularly well. The results for English literature look even more impressive, with both boys and girls achieving a significantly greater proportion of the higher grades than is found nationally, although it must be noted that slightly less than 60 per cent of the year group in this school were actually entered for the subject compared with a national entry of nearly 77 per cent.

78. The overall standard of work seen, across the year groups, is above average. Evidence indicates that students join the school with average standards of English overall, but the standards they have reached by Year 9 represent very good achievement. By Year 9, most students are able to write for a range of purposes and show good speaking and listening skills. Their choice of reading matter is quite mature, as could be seen amongst those who were observed choosing books in the library. Achievement is good in Years 10 and 11: the reason it is not very good is partly because students in recent years have started Year 10 with above average standards and do well to maintain their standards. There is also the fact that many are not entered for GCSE English literature, which means they cannot achieve as much. But a significant number of students are again likely to achieve the highest grades, A or A\*, in GCSE: their written work, at its best, is of a very high standard. Some fine work is already being done by Year 10 students.

79. The quality of teaching and learning is good. No unsatisfactory lessons were seen, and some were very good. There is a strong team of specialist teachers who know their subject well and plan lessons very thoroughly. The methods employed are often drawn from recent initiatives, with an emphasis on learning objectives and activities with a literacy focus at the start of lessons. Students work well in pairs or groups. Teachers use learning resources to good effect. These include the recently acquired interactive whiteboards, which give greater flexibility to board work, although not all teachers are yet confident about using them. The more successful lessons make use of the fact that images and text can easily be changed or returned to, saving time and effort. Students are involved in moving words on the screen, for instance in identifying quotations from *Romeo and Juliet* quickly. Most teachers expect and get a high standard of behaviour from students. Relationships between students and teachers are usually good, which contributes to students' achievement. Achievement is best where strict seating plans are adhered to, although the

imbalance between boys and girls in most classes places limits on gender mixing. Students are placed in sets according to their ability, but, strangely, all the sets follow the same lesson plans. In the better lessons, teachers adapt these to meet the needs of their students, but in too many lessons there is insufficient differentiation of tasks. There is some support for students with special educational needs: support staff are deployed to help students in the lower sets and the smaller numbers in these sets also allow the teachers to give more time to individuals. But the majority of the other classes seen derived little or no benefit from being grouped by ability as they were set the same work as other groups.

80. Written work is marked very thoroughly, and students are given every encouragement to improve on their work. They have clear targets, and are made very aware of what level they are working at or what grade they have achieved. Some use ICT to redraft written work, such as GCSE coursework, but there is limited access to computers in the school.

81. The subject is well led and managed by a head of department who has deployed her team of teachers effectively. She is a very good role model for her colleagues. The monitoring of teaching and learning is thorough and the organisation of student assessment is very good. Syllabus changes have been negotiated confidently, although there are still areas that need addressing, such as the policy on entering only a limited number of students for GCSE literature and the need for different tasks to be provided for students of differing abilities both within and across the English sets. Most of the English teaching rooms are adequate for their purpose, and benefit from the new technology, but some classes are taught in draughty huts where resources are more limited. Some classes have to move to the other site for English lessons, and time is lost; this was clearly having an impact on the achievement of at least one Year 11 class that was observed. But overall, improvement since the last inspection has been good. The issues raised then have been addressed and standards have risen, particularly in Years 7 to 9.

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

82. The literacy standards of most students in the school indicate that they have the language skills to cope with all their studies. By the end of Year 9, only 14 per cent of students have failed to reach the expected level in national tests in English, and over half have reached higher levels. Nearly two thirds of students reach at least grade C in GCSE English, so literacy is clearly not a weakness in the school. However, not all subjects have such good results as English, and better attention to literacy skills would not go amiss in a few areas.

83. There is a whole-school policy for literacy, although it is fairly generalised, and is not applied consistently across departments. Its focus is largely upon marking policies and spelling, and it makes insufficient reference to national strategies. Literacy is co-ordinated by a senior teacher, who did an initial audit and is aware of deficiencies. Some departments, such as music and physical education, have good literacy strategies, whilst others, such as ICT, do not. Others lay emphasis on technical vocabulary, but offer little help with language at sentence or text level.

84. Opportunities for paired reading are a help, as are the extra classes laid on by the English department. The special needs department also makes a significant contribution – they cast their net more widely than do most schools, for instance in targeting all Year 7 students whose reading age is 10 or lower. Reading ages and literacy scores are used as a measure for when and where to give support. Computer technology is used effectively: Successmaker is widely used to support reading and spelling, and there is evidence that this is having a measurable impact.

## **Modern foreign languages (French and Spanish)**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The language department is very well led by its new head to raise standards, and, as a result, examination results at GCSE have dramatically improved in the last two years.
- Teaching is good and there are many examples of very good practice.
- All students achieve well because teachers plan tasks that match the different needs of students.
- Students' behaviour is very good owing to firm classroom management and very good relationships.
- The way teachers assess students' work is not always rigorous enough to show them exactly how to improve.

### **Commentary**

85. GCSE results in 2003 were above the national average, a marked improvement on the previous year's results. The 2004 GCSE results were well above the national average in both French and Spanish, and show considerable improvement in French where all students attained at least a C grade. Boys achieved broadly as well as girls in French and nearly as well as girls in Spanish. National test results in Year 9 present a more erratic picture over the last three years. However, the 2004 test results show a good improvement over the results for the previous year. Standards in listening in French and in reading in Spanish are not as high as they could be.

86. Standards seen in French and Spanish are broadly in line with the national expectation in Years 7-9 as well as in Years 10 and 11. They are above the national expectation in Spanish for Year 10 students who manipulate the language creatively in their writing. Boys and girls achieve well in both languages in all skills. Students who learn English as an additional language achieve as well as their peers. Students with special educational needs make good progress because they receive good support. The more able students, including gifted and talented students, do not always achieve as highly as they can in French, particularly in writing.

87. Teaching and learning are good overall and there are examples of very good practice. In Spanish teaching is very good. The main features of effective teaching are:

- well-structured lessons that enable all students to achieve well;
- very good class management resulting in very good student behaviour;
- very good strategies to foster constructive working relationships and promote a mature attitude to work in students;
- good strategies to develop students' learning as well as linguistic skills;
- very good use of resources and time.

88. Teachers consistently use the target language, which enables students to develop good listening skills. They use very effective strategies for the improvement of students' reading skills in Spanish and listening skills in French. They prepare GCSE students well for their examination by providing a focused revision programme.

89. In the most successful lessons, teachers planned extensive practice of speaking skills to support the development of reading and writing skills. They made imaginative use of the language assistants to develop students' listening, speaking and writing skills. They provided consistent challenge obliging students to apply considerable effort, which resulted in very good achievement. They suitably extended the more able students through the use of dictionaries and ample opportunities for independent writing. They used peer assessment as an additional strategy to raise students' awareness of how to improve.

90. In the very few less successful lessons, the teacher's good teaching skills were not supported by secure subject knowledge in all aspects of the language; the language assistant was under-used; support for the less able students was insufficient or the tasks planned did not match their needs closely enough; the more able students were not sufficiently extended to be able to achieve as highly as they could.

91. The way teachers assess students' work is good overall although it varies from satisfactory to very good across the department. Analysis of students' work shows that teachers with the best practice diagnose students' strengths and weaknesses and clearly inform them of their national curriculum level and of what they have to do to improve. However, some teachers' marking is too cursory to have a positive impact on students' achievement.

92. Departmental leadership is very good and management is good. The departmental head has established clear priorities for development and delegates responsibilities effectively among her committed colleagues. However, inconsistencies in marking and in the extent to which students understand how to improve indicate that the quality of teaching and learning is not monitored sharply enough.

93. The increase in curricular time in Year 11 has helped raise standards. German has been discontinued because of staffing and timetabling constraints. Russian is offered as an extra-curricular activity. The curriculum is enhanced by a well-attended lunchtime club which is very popular with boys, one-week visits to France and Spain and various 'language-day' events. The accommodation is just satisfactory. The language department is not housed in a dedicated suite of rooms and the transport of resources is not always managed efficiently. Resources are adequate and teachers use interactive white boards effectively but students' access to information and communication technology is under-developed.

94. Improvement since the last inspection is good overall. The department has been successful in raising standards swiftly following the 2002 decline and there is the vision to develop languages further.

## **MATHEMATICS**

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Marking and other feedback to students does not give them enough information on how to progress to the next level or grade.
- All lessons follow the same structure and this enhances learning because students know what is expected of them.
- Students are not secure in basic number work and this limits their understanding of the more complex topics.
- Relationships between teachers and students are good and this enhances learning by making the lessons pleasant experiences.
- Students have positive attitudes towards work but rarely show any enthusiasm for the subject.

### **Commentary**

95. Results in the Year 9 tests, in 2004, were in line with the national average. GCSE results in 2004 were also in line with the national average. Boys' and girls' performance is broadly similar. Students do less well in mathematics than they do in most other subjects.

96. Students join the school with standards broadly in line with national averages. By the end of Year 11 they are still in line with national averages. This represents satisfactory achievement. Changes of personnel have enhanced the quality of teaching and raised achievement.

Consequently, during the inspection, achievement in lessons was good. These changes are too recent to have had an impact on standards.

97. Students' arithmetic skills are weak and are limiting their understanding and achievement in more complex topics. Short arithmetic activities at the start of lessons are being used to sharpen students' mental mathematics and are beginning to improve the situation. Teaching in all sets ensures that students do well, with no evidence of differences in the achievement of boys and girls or of students from different groups. In a Year 9 class students were able to calculate the inter-quartile range from a cumulative frequency curve. In a Year 11 class the students successfully analysed a complex graph. Good investigational skills were seen in well-presented coursework.

98. Teaching and learning are good. Relationships between teachers and students are positive and this motivates the students to work conscientiously. The students are willing learners and lessons are enjoyable. Teachers' good subject knowledge results in clear explanations and an emphasis on the use of the correct mathematical language. Students are confident when asked questions individually but rarely volunteer answers or demonstrate an enthusiasm for the subject. Lessons are carefully planned to a common format used by all teachers. This enhances learning because the students know what is expected of them. The use of interactive whiteboards in lessons impacts very well on students' learning because basic skills are taught quickly and efficiently to the whole class. Younger students are sometimes excited by what they can do. For instance in a Year 7 class students were enthralled by a Maths Alive program which required them to square numbers to win a game. Good question and answer taking place at the end of the lessons widens students' knowledge through the sharing of ideas. Students know their target grades. This is good as it provides them with a focus for improvement. Students receive little information though about what they need to do to progress from one grade or level to the next.

99. Good leadership and management has resolved staffing shortages and created a committed and mutually supportive team of teachers. They work purposefully to raise achievement and improve standards. Classrooms are located in suited accommodation that encourages close collaboration between teachers. Innovations, such as the introduction of the interactive whiteboards, have been well managed and are improving the provision. Progress since the last inspection has been satisfactory.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

100. The provision for mathematics across the curriculum is satisfactory. A policy document has been developed which requires curriculum areas to identify where the use of mathematics occurs. Examples were seen in geography, where scatter diagrams identified patterns of correlation between two variables, and in art where students enlarged shapes and pictures. The school's resource centre contains a limited number of texts to support individual study and research.

## **SCIENCE**

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teaching is good in Years 10 and 11.
- There is a climate of mutual respect and co-operation between staff and students across all year groups and particularly with older students.
- Good team work amongst staff is beginning to improve teaching and students' achievements but difficulties in recruiting teachers have limited the quality of science education.
- The quality of teaching in Years 7 to 9 is not as good as in Years 10 and 11.
- Some of the accommodation is unsatisfactory and this is a barrier to learning.

## Commentary

101. When students join the school in Year 7 their standards are broadly average and they remain so by the end of Year 9. This represents satisfactory progress. However, the progress for students in Years 7 to 9 is not as good as in Years 10 and 11: it is still satisfactory overall but learning is brisker and more focused. This is because teaching is better in Years 10 and 11. The proportion of students attaining A\*-C grades is slightly below the national average. However, recent double award GCSE modular examination results show that current Year 10 and 11 more students are on course to achieve the higher A\*-C grades over the next two years. Almost all the students taking triple science GCSE attained a pass grade.

102. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Up to Year 9 they are satisfactory but good in Years 10 and 11. In Year 7 to 9 many lessons are taught by inexperienced or temporary teachers. These lessons do not allow sufficient time for the consolidation of key scientific ideas. Consequently, many students are not developing their understanding or investigative skills as fast as they should. Older students are generally taught by more experienced teachers who use effective questioning to develop students' understanding of science. Their lessons are well planned and include a variety of tasks that are linked closely to clear learning targets.

103. Relationships between staff and students are good and most students take pride in their work. When teachers insist on high standards of behaviour the students respond well. Higher attaining students make predictions based on scientific knowledge and use mathematical skills to present and analyse experimental results.

104. Students are provided with regular comments on how they can improve and data is used appropriately to identify groups of students to receive additional support lessons. Students with special educational needs are well catered for and make the same progress as other students. The department makes effective contributions to a good premier league programme to motivate Year 11 boys and other booster classes.

105. Accommodation in the department is showing signs of age and deterioration. Six laboratories, including two recently refurbished, have layouts with little flexibility for effective learning in science; this situation is exacerbated because 40 per cent of lessons take place in ordinary classrooms.

106. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The head of department, after a period of serious staffing difficulties, has established a supportive team of conscientious teachers. Monitoring and evaluation of work in the classroom is very good. The science technicians make a very significant contribution to the quality of education provided in the department, including support in lessons.

107. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory overall. There has been some improvement in results in the Year 9 national tests and in Years 10 and 11 more students are on course to achieve the higher GCSE grades. Teaching in Years 10 and 11 is now good but it remains satisfactory in Years 7 to 9.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The statutory requirements for the teaching of ICT are not met. As a result achievement is unsatisfactory.
- Good teaching and leadership means that standards in the dedicated ICT courses are improving.
- There are not enough access to computers to enable all students to enhance their learning in subjects across the curriculum.

- The overall management of ICT is unsatisfactory but improvements this year the new head of department has taken a strong lead by implementing a range of strategies focused on improvement.

## **Commentary**

108. Students enter the school in Year 7 with ICT skills that are slightly below average. Evidence shows that by the end of Year 9, standards are well below average and their achievement is unsatisfactory. The reason for this is that not enough time is provided for ICT in Years 8 and 9. Results for GCSE and GNVQ show that standards are average when compared with similar schools: these students make good progress and achieve well. However, less than a third of students in Year 11 were entered for these examinations and the remaining two thirds are not taught ICT. As a result their overall achievement is unsatisfactory.

109. By the end of Year 11, those students who have followed an ICT course reach average standards. These students work in groups to plan a presentation, construct a spider-web-page and a database for a video-hire shop. Students with special educational needs and those that speak English as an additional language make similar progress to other students.

110. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall but good in the dedicated ICT lessons. This is as a result of very good planning and organisation that ensures good learning opportunities. The teachers now have a very good knowledge of ICT and are familiar with what students need to do to gain the highest grades. The computers and software available are good and make a strong contribution to the students' learning and teachers make good use of the interactive whiteboards. The structure and resources from the national strategy are being used in Year 7 and this is having a positive influence on outcomes. Students apply themselves well to the tasks set and are clear what they need to do to improve. Lateness results in time being lost at the start of most lessons and this means that students' learning is not always as good as it should be.

111. The overall management of ICT is unsatisfactory because statutory requirements for the teaching of ICT in Years 8 to 11 are not met and the progress of all students is not reported to parents. However, the new head of department has taken a strong lead by implementing a range of strategies focused on improvement. These include: after-school classes; targeting boys for improvement; mapping ICT across the curriculum; ensuring that coursework fully meets requirements. In addition there is now a range of appropriate policies that include the safe use of the Internet. Monitoring of teaching is helping to raise standards. The ratio of computers to students has increased. Overall, progress since the last inspection is satisfactory.

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

112. As in the previous inspection this continues to be unsatisfactory and does not meet statutory requirements. Students say that they make good use of ICT in RE but it is unsatisfactory in art, design and technology, geography, music and science, all of which would be expected to make a significant contribution to students' capability in ICT. The reason for this is that there are not enough computers. In contrast, teachers are beginning to make good use of interactive whiteboards to improve teaching and learning. This was seen to very good effect in English, mathematics and history.

## **HUMANITIES**

### **Geography**

Provision in geography is **good**.

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

- Standards at the end of Years 9 and 11 are well above average.
- Lesson planning is effective in encouraging student learning.
- There is an excessive use of worksheets as a teaching resource.
- The assessment and tracking of students' progress is effective.
- Students' analytical skills are developed well.
- There is limited access to computers to help learning.

#### **Commentary**

113. Standards are generally average on entry and by the end of Year 9 attainment is well above average. At the end of Year 11 GCSE results are also well above average and an increasing percentage of the students achieve a grade A or above. This reflects the thorough preparation of students for examinations, including the provision of self-study revision ICT packages. Standards in lessons and in students' work are broadly above average and all students demonstrate good achievement as they progress up the school. There are increasing opportunities to enable individual students to achieve at higher levels as many tasks are open ended.

114. Teaching overall is broadly good but is more effective in Years 10 and 11 where students are more willing to discuss complex issues. Teachers have good subject knowledge and an enthusiasm for the subject but a limited variety of teaching styles means that students get a uniform diet and a lot of worksheets. Lessons are carefully planned and thoughtfully structured. The National Strategy for Years 7 to 9 has a clear impact on classroom practices with effective starter activities and a stress on raising knowledge of subject vocabulary. The most effective teaching has a level of pace and challenge appropriate for the ability of the students which combine to engage the students' interest and progress their learning. Teaching is less effective where classroom management is poor or where there is little opportunity for individual initiative or independent work so students lose interest.

115. Learning is good for the majority of students because teachers carefully plan lessons to structure the work into short term tasks that can be easily absorbed and then use these as foundations for further learning experiences, for example students in Year 8 could appreciate the limitations of measures of development as applied to Brazil. One of the strengths of the department is its development of analytical skills such as photograph interpretation, as shown in Year 10 with the use of data from the Asian tsunamis to establish cause and affect relationships. There is a strong stress on location and geographical concepts in all lessons. There is a range of fieldwork activities including local environment studies in Year 7, and a river study in Year 10. Some limited use is made of ICT to support learning, such as the use of spreadsheets in Year 9 to analyse the relationship between earthquakes and death rates, but access to computers is very limited and this holds back the development of enquiry skills. A recently installed interactive whiteboard is used well.

116. Students' attitudes and behaviour in lessons are good in all years and students are interested in the subject. This is reinforced by the effective use of encouragement and praise from the teachers. Where behaviour is less positive it stems directly from inappropriate learning tasks.

117. The leadership of the subject is good with the head of department setting a clear departmental vision of raising student achievement. Work to raise standards, especially in Years 7 to 9, is helping to improve achievement and the quality of learning. Since the last inspection

improvement has been satisfactory. Results have risen and the department continues to offer a well-planned curriculum.

## **History**

Provision in history is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards are above average and are rising year-on-year.
- Teaching motivates student of all abilities and history is becoming increasingly popular.
- Leadership is good and teachers have a passion for their subject.
- Students benefit from many historical visits and excursions.
- Students' use of ICT in school as a learning tool is underdeveloped.

### **Commentary**

118. There has been a rising trend in examination performance over the past three years and in 2004 attainment was just above average. There were few A\* grades and boys were not represented at the highest level. However, because of increasing levels of challenge, detailed advice on examination technique and a vibrant history club, which GCSE students attend in large numbers, standards are rising. They are above average overall and, in some classes, they are well above: A and A\* potential is now much more apparent and among both boys and girls. Similarly, by the end of Year 9 many more students are operating at Level 5 and above than found nationally and there is no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls.

119. From average levels of attainment on entry to the school, students achieve well in the first three years and make good progress in the acquisition of historical skills. They analyse sources of evidence about the Slave Trade, for example, with increasing confidence and use historical terminology accurately and in context. GCSE students achieve well also and their understanding of the nature of evidence, and of the pitfalls inherent in using it, are major strengths. They evaluate primary and secondary sources with a skill which belies their years and their knowledge of political issues in inter-war Germany is more profound as a result.

120. Teaching and learning are good overall. Students are grateful for the advice and support of their teachers, for whom they have the highest regard. They are opting for GCSE courses in increasing numbers, enjoy history for its own sake and benefit from the wide variety of learning opportunities open to them. They often surprise themselves at what they can do, during the 'hot seat' activities in the excellent session on the Spartacists for example, and their speaking and listening skills are nurtured in almost every lesson. Teachers have secure knowledge of their subject and their enthusiasm for history is infectious: students are often desperate to become actively involved.

121. Leadership and management are good and there is a clear vision for development in the subject. Inexperienced teachers are supported very well and all staff are focused on raising achievement. Although most teachers are skilled in the use of new technology, they recognise that there is insufficient access to computers for their students. However, students' learning is extended by the wide range of historical trips, to Warwick Castle and to the First World War battlefields, for example.

122. The department has made good improvement since the last inspection. Standards in all years are higher and students' achievement has been maintained.

## TECHNOLOGY

### Design and technology

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

#### Strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE results are below average.
- The quality of teaching and learning are good.
- Systems for assessment and monitoring of students progress and attainment are good.
- The lack of computer equipment restricts the range of curriculum opportunities.
- Accommodation and resources are unsatisfactory.

123. By the end of Year 9, overall standards are average and achievement satisfactory. In 2004 GCSE results were below the national average overall but improved from 2003. This improvement is partly because a relatively high number of students achieved good grades in graphics and textiles and some good grades in the resistant materials course.. On the down side the results in the engineering group are poor. Girls tend to achieve higher grades than boys partly because they are better motivated and partly because the textiles course meets their needs well.

124. The work seen during the inspection confirms that standards are generally average and that students' achievements are satisfactory. However, a significant minority of students achieve well, particularly where they are well motivated. For example, a project to design and make a mechanical toy gave rise to some imaginative design, and good drawing and construction work. In food technology, students build on skills and understanding well: for example, students used theory skills in making different types of dough, learnt in a previous lesson, to make a pizza.

125. Skills in the use of computers are patchy. In general students make limited use of computers particularly in computer aided design and manufacture: this makes it difficult for them to achieve at the highest levels. This is because there is not enough computer equipment and this restricts the range of curriculum opportunities. Basic skills in literacy and numeracy, including reading aloud, develop alongside subject skills in accordance with school policy. Students with special educational needs make good progress in these projects, which allow success at a wide range of levels.

126. Teaching is good. Most teachers are new and the good teaching has not yet had enough time to have its full impact on students' achievement and progress. Strengths in teaching include thorough preparation and planning alongside sensitive individual tuition. Lessons have clear targets and planning includes enough challenge for the more able students. Students are managed well in lessons and relationships are good: as a result students behave well. Effective team work is helping to improve overall provision: for example, the use of assessment procedures is now a strong feature and used to inform teachers' planning. Students are made aware of their progress and how well they are matching their targets.

127. Accommodation is poor and is a barrier to high achievement. Practical rooms are in a poor condition and are scattered throughout the school. Food technology and textiles rooms are unsuitable: they are too small and poorly equipped for practical work. However, this has only a minimal impact on the GCSE results in textiles because students are motivated well and are prepared to come back after school to make sure they complete project work. The poor accommodation for food technology and the lack of qualified teachers means that the school cannot provide a GCSE course. The recent confirmation of Engineering College status has instigated valuable reconsideration of all aspects of the work of the department. There is good technician support for the department, in preparing materials and maintaining equipment.

128. Overall, leadership and management are satisfactory. The subject leader knows the current strengths and weaknesses in the provision and has worked closely with colleagues to

develop strategies for improvement. However, many of these strategies are at an early stage of development and they have yet to affect students' achievements. Teaching and students' achievements and progress are monitored appropriately. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. The department has experienced staffing and recruitment problems and this has limited the development of the subject as a whole. However, there is now a full complement of qualified teachers and this is reflected in the good quality of teaching.

## **VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS**

129. Drama and media studies were sampled and only three lessons were seen. As a result it is not possible to give an overall judgement about provision. **Drama** is taught throughout the school and there is a good record of examination success at GCSE. In 2004, 28 students took this examination, achieving 100 per cent pass rate and A-C grades just above the national average. Two good lessons were observed during the inspection, in Years 10 and 11. At A-level, drama has been less popular and successful, but with 15 students now on roll in Year 12, prospects for the subject in the sixth form look encouraging. **Media studies** is now one of the most successful GCSE courses. The 40 students who took the examination in 2004 attained A-C grades well above the national figure. A Year 11 lesson was observed during the inspection, and good work was being done by keen and co-operative students.

### **Art and design**

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

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

- Students make very good progress from the start of Year 7 to the end of Year 9.
- Achievement is satisfactory in Years 10 and 11.
- The large size of some groups impacts adversely on behaviour, standards and achievement.
- Standards are in line with national expectations in Year 9 and Year 11.
- Teachers are well informed and possess appropriate subject knowledge.
- Provision of ICT in art and design is unsatisfactory.

### **Commentary**

130. Students lack basic skills in the use of line, tone, shape and colour on entry to Year 7. Their initial drawings are of a poor standard, well below national expectations. However, later drawings show improvement as students gain in confidence and by Year 8 they are producing work of a standard that is higher than that produced in Year 7. There is evidence of good improvement in drawing skills in Year 9 and standards are now in line with national expectations. Achievement is very good from the start of Year 7 to Year 9.

131. In 2004 GCSE results improved from the previous year and overall standards are close to the national average. At present, students in Years 10 and 11 work with reasonable concentration within a narrow model of the curriculum that places emphasis on traditional drawing and painting skills. There was no evidence of any use of computers or digital cameras during the inspection. Students with special educational needs are well supported during lessons and make good progress. The majority of students are currently producing artwork of a standard that is in line with expectations. Achievement is satisfactory from the start of Year 10 to Year 11.

132. Teaching is satisfactory. Teachers are well informed and familiar with the requirements of the National Curriculum and the GCSE Examination. In the most successful lessons planning is carried out thoroughly and content clearly related to the level of understanding of the students. In the least satisfactory lessons, management of students is weak and objectives are not set with sufficient clarity to enable students to know what they are expected to do. The large size of some teaching groups, particularly in the smallest art studio, has an adverse impact on behaviour,

standards and achievement. Homework is set and marked regularly and feedback given to students. More formal written records are lacking in rigour at the moment.

133. Leadership is good and management satisfactory. The acting head of department has only been in post since the start of this year. However, he has a clear vision of how he would like to see the department develop in the future. At the moment, inherited systems and practices are being used but these are kept under review and modified where necessary. Assessing, recording and tracking systems are in place but these lack rigour and do not provide students with targets that are related to their individual needs.

134. Accommodation is unsatisfactory. There are three art studios that are split over two sites. This creates problems in respect of communication between teachers and movement of students between sites, which results in the loss of ten minutes at the start of some sixty-minute lessons. Two of the studios are of a reasonable size, the third very small. However, none is suited to accommodate large group sizes, which has an adverse impact on behaviour, standards and achievement. Storage of students' work, equipment and resources remains an issue. Resources are adequate but provision of ICT in art and design is unsatisfactory. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory.

## **Music**

Provision in music is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The quality of teaching and learning is good.
- Very good musicians provide strong support to students' musical activities.
- Recent good management has resulted in good progress since the last inspection.
- Students achieve well because of well-planned effective teaching.
- Accommodation and resources are of poor quality and not always suitable for the delivery of the curriculum.
- Access to ICT, especially for GCSE students, is unsatisfactory.

## **Commentary**

135. The majority of students achieve well to reach the national expectations by the end of Year 9. Students continue to do well in Year 10 and 11. The school can demonstrate that recently for students in Years 9 and 11 standards are rising and achievement is good. Gifted and talented students are encouraged to do well because of the very well-planned opportunities provided for them to work at a higher level both in class and through the broad provision of extra-curricular activities. Students in Year 7, 8 and 9 show growing confidence in working with notation. Small group and individual performances demonstrate an enthusiastic response to making music and a commitment to perform well. GCSE results are improving and the number of students taking the GCSE course is rising.

136. The overall quality of teaching and learning are good. Teachers are making good use of elements of the national strategy. Clear lesson objectives and good lesson plans mean that the needs of different students are properly met. As a result all students, including those identified as gifted and talented or with special needs, make good progress. Teachers have a good knowledge of the subjects and high expectations of students: this is leading to good learning for all groups of students. Teaching is characterised by very good musicians who ensure full attention is given to the development of a musical vocabulary and key words and the concepts they represent.

137. Good progress has been made since the previous inspection. The school has worked hard to ensure that all students receive a broad range of musical experiences and to implement an appropriate music curriculum. Students have the opportunity to sing and play instruments in a

variety of different size groupings both within and outside the school day. The opportunities for students to extend their musical activities are wide and varied.

138. Leadership and management are good overall. Due to strong and effective management, music is now being developed well in the school despite the challenges and pressures posed by poor accommodation and resources. Both of these limit the breadth of student learning throughout the school. The accommodation is unhelpful for music making because there is such poor sound insulation between teaching rooms. Limited access to computers is hindering students' development. Music continues to be an important part of the spiritual life of the school and makes a positive contribution to the development of students' moral, social and cultural development.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

Provision in physical education is **good**.

### **Mains strengths and weaknesses**

- Consistently good teaching leads directly to good learning.
- Very good leadership ensures that all students can make good progress.
- The curriculum is more biased to games than is usually the case in Year 9.
- Accommodation overall is unsatisfactory and restricts the pace of learning.

### **Commentary**

139. Standards at GCSE in 2004 were approaching the national average. This maintains a steady trend over several years, where standards are rising faster in the department than they are nationally. Students did as well in this subject as they did in their other subjects.

140. By the end of Year 9, teacher assessments show that standards are at the national expectation. Given the below average standards of students on entry to the school, this represents good achievement. By the end of Year 11, overall standards are better than would normally be expected because students build on the strong foundations of earlier years. Students from all groups achieve well in lessons. Progress and learning in a range of activities is good.

141. In a Year 7 dance lesson, the teacher strongly encouraged students to work with both flair and discipline to create movement patterns in different formations. In a very good Year 10 lesson on "Drugs in sport", the students learned well because the teacher kept them focused on the learning objectives. In GCSE lessons, students are normally well motivated, though some find the subject taxing.

142. The curriculum in Years 7 and 8 has breadth, balance and relevance for all groups of students, but in Year 9, the amount of time spent learning games is higher than is normally recommended. In Years 10 and 11 the amount of time for the subject is acceptable. A good range of extra-curricular activities provides opportunities for many students to refine their performances.

143. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. Two very good lessons were seen. Teachers have secure knowledge and are enthusiastic in their delivery. Detailed lesson plans support comprehensive schemes of work. Class management is very good, giving all students the opportunity to engage successfully, and to learn well. Teaching methods are varied, and good demonstrations and clear exposition meet the needs of all students.

144. Students respond well to the positive learning environment created by purposeful teaching. Attendance is good and very few students do not take part in lessons. They pay attention to guidance and work co-operatively with enthusiasm, even when not under immediate supervision. Students conduct their own warm ups and they can make relevant comments about improving their own and others' learning. Relationships and behaviour in lessons are good, though some boys fail to appreciate the work the teachers are doing.

145. Leadership of the department is very good, and management is good. Staff are well deployed to meet the demands of the curriculum. There is a clear vision of continuous improvement, and the skills are present to make this ambition a reality. Comprehensive schemes of work are based on nationally recognised models. The developing assessment system is beginning to provide objective data for measuring learning outcomes and for improving the planning of teaching. The department is active in the school sports' co-ordinator scheme, working with local partner primary schools to raise standards of physical education in younger students. Despite having a new sports hall, accommodation is generally unsatisfactory.

146. Improvement since the last inspection is good. Statutory requirements are met. Issues previously identified have been addressed or contained. Physical education is a successful subject, and has the capacity to secure further improvement.

## **BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES**

### **Business education**

Provision in business studies is **good**.

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

- GCSE results are above the national average and represent good student achievement.
- Lessons are very well prepared and structured with clear learning outcomes.
- Teachers set high expectations in terms of behaviour and productivity and are very well managed.
- The department is well managed.
- Accommodation and the use of ICT are unsatisfactory for some students and classes.

#### **Commentary**

147. GCSE results are consistently above the national average in this popular choice of subject. Although the 2004 results fell slightly they still represent good achievement. Boys performed marginally better than girls but the department is tackling this and more general performance issues with an after school business club for the more able, revised teaching materials and regular 'drop-in' workshops. Current students are also achieving well and show a good grasp of basic business terminology, particularly in their written work, for example in describing and applying marketing and financial terms. The induction work undertaken at the end of Year 9 provides a good foundation for studying the subject in Years 10 and 11.

148. Teaching and learning are good with a shared expectation among the specialist teachers that lessons are well planned and structured, are taught in good order and have clear and explicit learning outcomes shared with students. As a consequence students, including those with special educational needs, work productively as individuals and in groups and make good progress in lessons and achieve well over time. For example, in a good Year 10 lesson students were able to describe accurately the characteristics of the different stages of the product life cycle and in a good Year 11 lesson, students built on previously acquired knowledge to analyse how good communication is essential for successful businesses. Students generally have a positive attitude to their studies. However, many are compliant rather than engaged and enthusiastic about the subject. This is particularly so if the teaching is too teacher-led and unresponsive to the pace of learning or if students' contributions are not explicitly praised. Students' work is marked thoroughly and their progress tracked well by individual teachers. Students know where they are, what their target grades are and what they need to do to improve. They appreciate the support offered by teachers.

149. Leadership and management are good. The head of department effectively manages and deploys the team according to individual strengths and there are mechanisms in place to ensure consistency of approach, content and the sharing of good practice. Training and continuing

professional development for staff is limited although the opportunities to attend awarding body feedback sessions are taken. Departmental performance is monitored and evaluated, although the development plan does not contain sufficiently detailed or explicit targets to measure success. There are a number of business links in place to support students' learning although these are not as extensive as they could be, particularly in providing opportunities to further develop an understanding of the practical aspects of business. There is specialist, appropriately resourced business studies accommodation but it is inadequate to accommodate all classes. The department has recently acquired a suite of computers which will allow greater access for students, who currently have limited usage of them. There has been good progress in the subject over the last three years but since the last inspection improvement has been satisfactory.

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

Provision in citizenship is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- An audit has been carried out to determine contribution to citizenship in all curriculum areas.
- Students are encouraged to participate in the day-to-day running of the school.
- Citizenship is identified within the PSHCE curriculum; planning for discrete timetabling is in the process of development.
- Information Technology is not used well to assist learning.

### **Commentary**

150. All students have a planned programme of activities which includes education for citizenship. This is supplemented in Years 8 and 9 by provision through the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network course (ASDAN). The ASDAN course contributes well to students' understanding of citizenship, community awareness and leadership skills. However, it does not always challenge students sufficiently and some in Year 9 mark time. The school council makes a sound contribution to citizenship through elections, debating of issues and student representation of issues of concern.

151. The range of teaching methods observed during the inspection was underdeveloped and the opportunities to develop the use of ICT not included in planning. Teaching observed was mostly satisfactory. More opportunities need to be provided to challenge students to discuss and debate.

152. There is some evidence that the subject is seen as an important way to reinforce the ethos of the school which is built on 'respect for our neighbour'. The subject co-ordinator is well aware of the actions that need to be taken to bring about the necessary improvements to develop this subject so that work is matched by the development of resources enabling students to have access to very good quality tools.

153. Assessment procedures are sound overall although target setting is not sufficiently developed to help students improve their work. There is a range of activities that reflect many of the requirements of citizenship such as collective worship raising money for charities and extra-curricular activities which provide a rich and varied range of experiences; these help students understand about their responsibilities as both national and global citizens.

## SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

In the inspection, 10 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 school.

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 |         |
|--|----------------|----------------------|---------|----------------------|---------|---------------------|---------|
|  |                | School               | England | School               | England | School              | England |
| English                                  | 10             | 80.0                 | 86.2    | 20.0                 | 17.4    | 26.0                | 29.7    |
| Mathematics                              | 18             | 11.1                 | 59.9    | 0.0                  | 14.1    | 2.8                 | 20.5    |
| Chemistry                                | 10             | 50.0                 | 70.3    | 0.0                  | 13.2    | 12.0                | 23.0    |
| Information and communication technology | 13             | 53.8                 | 66.6    | 0.0                  | 8.8     | 13.8                | 20.6    |
| History                                  | 5              | 60.0                 | 82.2    | 0.0                  | 20.8    | 14.0                | 29.2    |
| Design and technology                    | 3              | 33.3                 | 72.6    | 0.0                  | 13.9    | 6.7                 | 24.3    |
| Art and design                           | 1              | 100.0                | 78.3    | 0.0                  | 21.6    | 40.0                | 28.5    |
| Physical education                       | 2              | 100.0                | 72.2    | 0.0                  | 11.8    | 25.0                | 22.8    |
| Business education                       | 0              | n/a                  | 75.3    | n/a                  | 15.4    | n/a                 | 25.7    |

### ***Level 3 GCE A level and VCE courses***

| Subject                                  | Number entered | % gaining grades A-E |         | % gaining grades A-B |         | Average point score |         |
|--|----------------|----------------------|---------|----------------------|---------|---------------------|---------|
|  |                | School               | England | School               | England | School              | England |
| English                                  | 13             | 100.0                | 99.4    | 46.2                 | 44.9    | 83.1                | 85.5    |
| Mathematics                              | 9              | 100.0                | 96.8    | 22.2                 | 56.6    | 71.1                | 89.5    |
| Chemistry                                | 9              | 77.8                 | 97.7    | 0.0                  | 50.0    | 42.2                | 85.7    |
| Psychology                               |                |                      |         |                      |         |                     |         |
| Information and communication technology | 6              | 100.0                | 96.3    | 33.3                 | 25.7    | 76.7                | 71.1    |
| History                                  | 13             | 100.0                | 99.0    | 30.8                 | 45.6    | 78.5                | 85.1    |
| Design and technology                    | 10             | 100.0                | 97.8    | 10.0                 | 35.0    | 68.0                | 77.9    |
| Art and design                           | 7              | 100.0                | 98.3    | 71.4                 | 50.2    | 100.0               | 87.1    |
| Physical education                       | 7              | 100.0                | 97.8    | 28.6                 | 30.9    | 77.1                | 75.4    |
| Business education                       | 6              | 100.0                | 98.9    | 50.0                 | 39.4    | 96.7                | 81.8    |

## ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

The focus for the inspection was English. However, **French** was sampled and in the one Year 12 lesson seen, and the analysis of Year 12 students' work, all students were achieving well and standards of work seen are in line with the national expectation. Students' behaviour and attitude were excellent although one student's poor attendance is beginning to have a negative impact on achievement. The quality of teaching was good and the teacher used effective strategies to encourage students to speak long enough to develop the required competence in speaking. However, this is not yet supported by the acquisition of higher level vocabulary. Students are developing a fluent style in writing and know how to locate key words when listening to a taped text so as to take meaningful notes. They are enthusiastic about the AS course and intend to take French at A-level.

### English

Overall, provision for English is **good**.

#### Strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good: teachers use their knowledge and enthusiasm effectively to develop students' interest in the subject and their understanding of the texts.
- Students respond well and there is evidence of independent learning.

#### Commentary

154. At the time of the last inspection, A-level results were well above the national average. Performance fell in 2003 and only 23 per cent of those entered attained A-B grades, in comparison with the national figure of 46.5 per cent. However, in 2004 there was a marked improvement, with A-level standards matching the national figure. Although only three boys took the examination, they all did well and their high grades helped to raise the overall standard.

155. Fluctuation in standards and also in the numbers taking A-level over recent years can be linked to staffing problems. Currently, standards, staffing and student numbers have improved and there are encouraging signs that English is regaining its position as a leading A-level subject. During the inspection it was not possible to see lessons in Year 13, but folders of students' work were examined students took part in a short discussion about their course.

156. Entry to the course requires only a C grade for English in GCSE, and in both years there is a wide range of actual and potential attainment. Written work shows that some students in both years have A-B grade potential while others are more likely to attain a modest pass grade. Interest in the work and steady application are evident at all levels, and achievement is good across the whole ability range. Teachers provide carefully both for higher attainers and those who need additional support.

157. After one full term, most Year 12 students have adapted well to the demands of the AS course. They know that independent learning means researching and exploring for themselves, bringing their findings and ideas to class and sharing them with the group. Some good examples of this were seen, including effective use of PowerPoint presentation. Teachers are keen to encourage interactive work but the size of some groups makes this difficult. With 23 students in one group, seminar style seating and teaching are not possible and in a group of only six students, opportunities for wider discussion are limited. Teachers cope well with these constraints, using either lecture or tutorial techniques as appropriate, but the numbers imbalance does not permit the range of activities they would like to include in their lessons.

158. Teaching is good overall and has many strengths. There is good planning, both departmental and individual. Teachers know the texts well and share their interest and enthusiasm very effectively, so that in most lessons there is a lively sense of discovery and enjoyment.

Students in Year 12 are studying *The Handmaid's Tale*, *Much Ado about Nothing* and poems by Carol Ann Duffy. In discussing their work, they were particularly enthusiastic about new approaches to Shakespeare, finding greater depth and insight in their study of the plays at this level in comparison with GCSE work or earlier reading. Good, close work is being done on all the texts, both in class and independently. Students are expected to write regularly between major course assignments, steadily developing their knowledge and their writing confidence. Teachers mark carefully, using the examination criteria competently and giving students guidance on strengths, weaknesses and means of improvement.

159. This effective team of teachers, under good departmental leadership and management, is working hard to raise A-level standards and to continue the improvement in English achieved in the main school. Outside lessons teachers give time generously for revision and support.

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

160. Most A-level subjects make good use of students' language skills and develop these further by a range of spoken and written activities. In history there is strong emphasis on language development and on good presentational skills. In geography, subject vocabulary is a strength and its earlier development in the main school continues impressively at A-level. A-level mathematics students are encouraged to use good mathematical language and in art and music there is good use of key words, oral skills and written evaluation. Information technology does less well, giving insufficient emphasis to the use of key words and to the development of literacy through the subject generally.

## **MATHEMATICS**

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teachers are secure in their subject knowledge ensuring that students are taught with accuracy and enthusiasm.
- Students are attentive in lessons but do not extend their involvement into originating fresh lines of mathematical thinking.
- Student-teacher relationships are positive but do not include students ensuring that they have the correct equipment in lessons or submit homework on time.

### **Commentary**

161. Results in the 2004 AS-level examinations were well below the national average and those in the A-level were below. Only seven students took the A-level in 2004. The small number of entries can result in wide fluctuations when compared to national standards.

162. The course attracts students with a wide range of abilities, many joining with standards which are below and well below average for advanced level study. Standards seen in the lessons observed, and in the scrutiny of students' work, were below average overall. Students join the course with standards below average and leave the course with similar standards. This constitutes satisfactory achievement. Work seen shows that students take an interest in the subject and a pride in the presentation of their work.

163. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. All lessons in the sixth form are delivered by mathematicians who have good subject and examination knowledge. This enhances learning as it means that students are coached in how to do well in the examinations. Teachers are enthusiastic and keen to encourage the use of the correct mathematical language. Relationships between teachers and students are positive, with supportive advice given in individual discussions. Marking shows students what they have done wrong but does not relate to the examination grades. Lessons are well planned and organised. In a good Year 12 lesson, comparing data regarding a

comparison of alcohol abuse between men and women, the teacher ensured that students made good learning gains by using the interactive whiteboard to good effect. Students are willing and compliant learners. They are attentive but rarely ask questions of the teacher which extend the mathematical content of the lesson. Some students arrive at lessons without the necessary equipment or do not submit homework on time.

164. Leadership and management are good overall. Against the background of recruitment difficulties leadership has ensured that lessons are taught by enthusiastic subject specialists. There is a strong sense of teamwork, with a shared ambition for improvement being very apparent. Lessons, rooms and equipment are well organised. Resources are satisfactory and include the good use of interactive whiteboards. Progress since the last inspection has been satisfactory.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

165. The provision for mathematics across the curriculum is satisfactory. Students say that their knowledge of the subject is sufficient for them to cope in other areas. During the inspection few examples of mathematics being used across the curriculum were observed. In chemistry students constructed molar and ionic equations although some found this difficult. In textiles they used tessellations in designing patterns. Students studying design and technology constructed geometric shapes such as cones and pyramids.

## **SCIENCE**

### **Chemistry**

Provision in chemistry is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Achievement of AS-level students is good because of the very good teaching they receive.
- The numbers of students studying chemistry have doubled since the last inspection.
- Achievement is sometimes hindered by over-reliance on the teacher.

### **Commentary**

166. Standards of work in Years 12 and 13 are good. Work seen in Year 12 is average and reflects accurately the capability and prior attainment of the group. Higher attaining students use their good mathematical skills effectively to enhance their work. Average and lower attaining students understand concepts and chemical principles but find calculations and work involving formulae difficult.

167. Work seen in Year 13 is good overall. Higher attaining students manage most areas of learning well. However, the practical skills of all students are underdeveloped. In Years 12 and 13, most students' folders are well sequenced with key concepts highlighted. The folders of a few students are untidy and unsuitable for purposes of revision.

168. Achievement in external examinations this year is much improved because teachers have invested time to support the students who re-enter modules to improve their grades. For example, two A-level candidates, who achieved A grades in AS modules, recently retook the examinations to gain extra marks, that will contribute to higher overall attainment in A-level at the end of the course. Recent A-level and AS-level results show good achievement in line with students' GCSE results. Higher attaining students achieve well in the examinations because their skills in calculation are good.

169. The quality of teaching and learning is very good overall. Teachers make effective use of their good knowledge and understanding of chemistry to ensure that students learn accurate information. In one Year 12 lesson the teacher skilfully and accurately explained the essential first

steps in the task. In another, students were challenged to generate and make multimedia presentations on topics related to atomic structure and bonding. This type of intensive support ensures that the students are well prepared for demanding follow-up work. On the other hand, this support sometimes means that students rely too much on the teacher and their achievement is hindered.

170. Students' attitudes in chemistry are very good, particularly in Year 13. Although many find the subject difficult they enjoy the challenge. They appreciate the good individual and class help they receive from their teachers.

171. Very good leadership and management are helping to raise interest and achievement in the subject. The improvement since the last inspection is good. The number of students studying the subject has increased significantly and at the same time standards have been maintained.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

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

### **Strengths and weaknesses**

- Examination results at GCE A-level are above average and AS-level results are average but improving.
- Achievement is good as a result of the good teaching and organisation.
- There are insufficient computers to ensure that students access to ICT.

### **Commentary**

172. Results at AS-level results for students in Year 12 are below average but indications are that they are now improving. Results at GCE A-level are above average and look to remain at that level.

173. The prior attainment of many students starting Year 12 is relatively low but they make good progress and overall achievement is good. Students make further progress in Year 13 and here achievement is also good. This is because the teachers respond well to the needs of the students and have a good knowledge of examination requirements. Students have a good grasp of the layouts and styles that they need to use in their AVCE coursework and the teacher places good emphasis on literacy issues. Their positive attitudes to their work and application contribute well to their achievement.

174. Teaching and learning are good with some very good features. The lessons are very well prepared and teachers have very good knowledge of the subject and the examination requirements. This enables them to present lessons in a way that best facilitates learning. Assessment and tracking of students is very good and this contributes well to good progress. The resources and support from technicians are good but some of the accommodation is cramped. Both oral and written feedback from teachers is very good and students are clear what they need to do to improve. Too often, lateness results in time being lost at the start of lessons and this equates to a significant amount of time over the year.

175. The management and leadership of the department are good. The new head of department has ensured that there is useful documentation that provides a basis for good organisation and planning and he provides a good role model. Regular minuted meetings of the department, the monitoring of teaching and staff training all contribute well to student outcomes.

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

176. As in the previous inspection this remains unsatisfactory. This is because there are not enough computers to enable students to improve their learning through the use of ICT in all subject areas. However, teachers in English, mathematics and history are making good use of interactive whiteboards, which is improving students' learning.

## **HUMANITIES**

The focus of the inspection was history and psychology but one lesson was sampled in sociology. Here, the teaching and learning were very good. Challenging and relentless questions and warm relationships meant that students made very good progress in understanding the value of pressure groups in a democratic society.

### **History**

Provision in history is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

#### **Commentary**

- Standards are improving and students write perceptive historical essays.
- Teachers have a secure knowledge of their subject and challenge their students to think like historians.
- Students enjoy their studies and more are now opting for advanced courses.
- On occasions, lessons are over-structured and students cannot explore their ideas in more detail.

177. There has been an upward trend in examination performance since 2003. In 2004, GCSE results were average, but there were no A grades and girls reached higher standards than boys. However, because the scheme of work and programmes of study have been modified, standards seen during the inspection were higher and are above average. This represents good achievement. Students have the potential to reach the higher grades.

178. Achievement across both years is good. In Year 13, for example, the majority of students are now producing thought-provoking essays, with clear introductions, detailed content and convincing conclusions. The best work, on the career of Benjamin Disraeli for example, comprised a perceptive analysis of the work of relevant historians and would not go amiss in an undergraduate seminar.

179. Teachers are specialists in their particular topics and their explanations and anecdotes are valued by their students. Questioning in lessons is challenging, yet support and advice are never far away. Students work maturely in pairs and groups and history is becoming an increasingly popular subject. Teaching is good overall and staff believe that students can learn much from each other, as in the very good lesson on the influence of the First World War on the British political parties, for example. They recognise, too, that in some sessions, students need more time to reflect on their own research.

180. The department is well led and managed and it is to the teachers' credit that more students are now opting to read history and history-related courses at university. Improvement since the last inspection is good. Standards are still above average and more students are now entered for advanced examinations.

## Psychology

Provision in psychology is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards at A-level have varied over recent years. In 2004, they were above average, whilst those at AS-Level were below average. Achievement, overall, is good.
- The quality of students' research tasks for coursework at A-Level is excellent.
- The quality of teaching and learning is good. It is best where students are encouraged to discuss or research in groups, but in some lessons too much is done for students, rather than by them.
- Good use is made of ICT for the teacher's presentations in some lessons, but the pace of exposition is too slow in some other lessons.
- Management of the subject is in a period of transition. It has yet to take account of the skills and enthusiasm of the current staff.
- The attitudes of students are very good.

### Commentary

181. Psychology is an increasingly popular subject, which attracts large numbers of students, particularly at AS-Level. Attainment over the last few years has varied widely. Whilst, at A-Level, most, if not all, students pass each year, the proportion achieving the highest grades has varied. In 2001, it was very high, but in 2002 and 2003 was well below average. In 2004, results were above average with half attaining these higher grades. Whilst the subject attracts a significantly greater number of boys, results of boys and girls at A-level were similar. At AS-level, however, girls attain higher grades overall, with a disproportionate number of boys and black students failing to attain a grade in 2004. Only three-quarters passed at AS-level, with only a quarter attaining higher grades.

182. A number of factors have affected standards in recent years. There were difficulties in recruiting an effective replacement to a successful head of department, and some students entered at AS-level were placed on the course inappropriately. The subject is taught now by two young and enthusiastic teachers, whose initiatives can be seen to be raising standards. The attitudes of students are now very good. The improvement at A-level in 2004 was substantially the result of the high quality of coursework submitted. On this module, three-quarters of students attained grade A, the rest grade B. Work seen from the current Year 13 is of a similar high standard. Whilst students are encouraged to adopt a clear, structured approach to their coursework, they are also encouraged to choose their own topic of research. The range of topics is exemplary. For example, one has researched the effects of background music on educational achievement. Students use a variety of statistical analyses and display very good understanding of research methods. The quality of this work indicates very good achievement in Year 13. Achievement in Year 12 is more varied. Achievement in lessons and in many essays sampled is good, but that in examinations last year was unsatisfactory. Overall, achievement in psychology is good.

183. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge. Students experience a good mix of teaching styles. When given the opportunity, they work well in groups and pairs and discuss animatedly. For example, discussions of different research methods to study violence in children displayed excellent insight into various types of research. However, in many lessons the pace of work is too slow and too much is done for students. There are some good quality teacher presentations using ICT, but the quality of student presentations varies widely dependent on the appropriateness of the task set and the resources provided to them. Whilst students are encouraged to sensibly write notes in their own words, too much time is spent copying notes rather than annotating copies of presentation slides. Good use is made of question and answer sessions at the start and finish of lessons. Students are encouraged to carry out research as part of homework, making use of the Internet. Assessment is thorough. Essays are marked appropriately with indications of how to improve. Advice on coursework is exemplary.

184. Leadership of the department is in a state of transition. Part of a social sciences faculty, the subject now has good staffing. There is the expertise to successfully lead and manage developments in the subject. The departmental development plan is appropriate, with emphasis on developing the use of ICT and more active learning styles.

## **ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING**

The focus of the inspection was design and technology but **GNVQ engineering** was sampled and one lesson was seen. This course is offered to a small group of pupils in Year 12. The standards achieved were well below that expected for a course at this level. The course does not meet the needs of students because the demands of the syllabus are too difficult. As a result the rate of learning is slow.

### **Design and technology**

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

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

- The quality of teaching and learning are good.
- Standards achieved in examinations are below average.
- Systems for assessment and monitoring of students progress and attainment are good.
- Accommodation and resources are unsatisfactory.

#### **Commentary**

185. The GCE AS and A-level results for 2004 are below average and the numbers entered were low. Evidence from the inspection shows that standards are improving: in lessons students' work is in line with expectations in product design. In textiles students are doing well because expectations are good. In lessons the structure and activities clearly focused their learning. In discussion with students they demonstrate a good level of knowledge and apply it in a range of contexts.

186. The quality of teaching is good and students learn well as a result. Teachers plan their work carefully and ensure an appropriate variety of activities. Good relationships ensure that students enjoy their work and are well motivated. Coursework assignments and teachers' expectations are suitably demanding and this ensures that students are appropriately stretched.

187. Students learn well, they are attentive, work productively and respond well to the supportive teaching and different learning styles they experience. In the lessons seen, time was used well. Students support and help each other effectively and, in groups, talk and listen to each other in a mature way as part of their learning. Students are always confident when offering ideas in more open discussion and this was seen in the lesson where pupils were evaluating the design process.

188. The management of the courses is good. Practical work and theory are integrated well and students are expected to carry out a significant amount of work in their own time. The department is open to students outside of lessons to assist them with their project work. As in the main school the accommodation is poor. Rooms are in poor condition: some are too small and poorly equipped for practical work. To some extent good teaching and course management mitigates this but the unsatisfactory accommodation makes it difficult for students to reach the highest standards in examinations.

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

### **Art and design**

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

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

- Standards are above national expectations at the end of Year 13.
- Achievement is good from the start of Year 12 to Year 13.
- Students have few opportunities to develop concepts and ideas through the use of ICT.
- Teachers engage students in interesting discussion about work in progress.
- Studio space is satisfactory but there are issues surrounding the storage of work.

#### **Commentary**

189. In the GCE AS-level examination in 2003 attainment was above the national average. In 2004 there was a decline in the number of students achieving the highest grades, but results remained just above the national average. In the GCE A-level examination in 2003, attainment was above the national average but in 2004 there was significant improvement and 71 per cent of students achieved grades A-B by comparison with the national figure of 50 per cent.

190. Year 12 students make good progress. They settle very readily to their work and are keen to develop their own concepts and ideas. Although they function within a highly traditional model of the curriculum, they explore ideas by experimenting with a range of media and collage materials. Others have gained sufficient self-confidence to work on large prepared boards that will be painted using oils or acrylic paints. Standards are above national expectations. Although no Year 13 lessons were observed, visual diaries were made available for inspection. These revealed that these students are making good progress. They work much more from their own ideas, concepts, attitudes and beliefs as starting points for exploration and investigation. There is also evidence that they have refined their understanding of how to develop and improve ideas over time. Standards are above national expectations. Retention is very poor however, as only one student remains in Year 13, out of a group of 11 that started the course in Year 12.

191. Teaching and learning are good in Years 12 and 13. Teachers make a point of involving students in discussion about their work during the start of each lesson. Students are obliged to think carefully about what they are doing before responding, which has improved their analytical and evaluative skills. Teachers are well informed and familiar with the requirements of the GCE AS and A-level examination specifications. This ensures that they provide sound advice and support for students who are expected to develop their capacity for working independently and for carrying out research at home.

192. The department is well led and well managed. The recently appointed head of department has a clear vision for the future and is keen to incorporate much greater use of computers, digital cameras and printers into the workings of the department. Although assessing, recording and tracking systems are in place, they lack rigour and can be improved to provide much more detailed feedback to individual students.

193. Accommodation is just satisfactory and Year 12 and 13 students work mainly in the largest of the available studios. However, there are restrictions in terms of the scale of objects that can be produced due to storage issues. Resources too are just adequate when viewed within the context of what is primarily a very traditional model of the curriculum. However, the provision of computers, digital cameras, scanners and printers in the art department is unsatisfactory. Overall standards in Years 12 and 13 remain above the national expectations and there has been satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection.

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

### **Physical education**

Provision in physical education is good.

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

- Good teaching leads directly to good learning.
- Almost all students who set out on examination courses complete them.
- Good leadership and management ensures that students have every opportunity to succeed.

#### **Commentary**

194. In 2004, standards at both A-level and AS-level were broadly average by all measures. This was expected, and reflected a rising trend. Numbers on courses are rising quickly and retention rates are very good.

195. Standards seen in both students' folders and in lessons are average. Based on the below average standards with which students enter the sixth form, this represents good achievement.

196. Students in the sixth form have good attitudes to learning and produce coursework of a good standard. They find advanced level work demanding, but interesting. The theoretical work of Year 13 students is of a higher standard than would be expected based on their prior attainment. Different groups of students make progress at broadly similar rates.

197. Year 12 students meet the challenges set by well-planned and demanding teaching. All students are able to distinguish between play, recreation and sport. They have a good understanding of the technical vocabulary of the subject.

198. Year 13 students were not present in school during the inspection and no lessons were seen. Detailed examination of students' work, and extrapolations from Year 12, indicates that they are able to draw on their general knowledge and understanding of wider issues, to synthesize sensible conclusions from research and discussions. Most students have an accurate understanding of the functioning of the heart.

199. Teaching is good, and this encourages students of all abilities to learn well. The best teaching is characterised by the clarity of its objectives, which consolidate and extend previous work, and by the challenges it presents to students to take responsibility for their own learning, often by the use of open-ended questions. Teachers demonstrate very good subject knowledge in their questioning and exposition. They have high expectations of their students in terms of work rate and performance, both physical and intellectual. Students respond positively to teachers' demands though some have yet to realise the full implication of undertaking an advanced course of study.

200. Leadership and management are good. Particular staff strengths are well deployed to meet the demands of the sixth form syllabus. The teaching team are energetic and committed and have strong determination to raise standards even higher. Assessments are regular and give students a clear picture of their own progress.

201. Satisfactory accommodation and good resources support the effectiveness of well-planned and organised lessons. It is impossible to evaluate improvement in provision since the last inspection.

## BUSINESS

Provision in business studies is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well at A-level with excellent results in 2004.
- Teaching is well planned and structured with clearly expressed learning outcomes.
- The department is well managed with a clear vision for developing this popular subject further.
- Specialist teachers are well managed and there is a clear vision for developing the subject.
- Recent results for the AVCE are unsatisfactory.

### Commentary

202. Students taking business studies A-level invariably gain at least a pass in this subject with the six students entered in 2004 gaining grade D or above, above the national average. In 2003, results were below the national average. However, taking account of students' starting point they generally achieve well at A-level and fulfil their potential. Currently, students are achieving similarly with some particularly good written work observed on the more difficult business topics such as elasticity of demand and correlation.

203. Students taking the AVCE in business have been less successful, with just 61 per cent of students gaining a pass grade and none gaining one of the two top grades. Over the past two years results have been lower than those in 2002 where all sixteen students passed. The department is tackling the issue with more rigorous monitoring of current students' performance, particularly their coursework, and additional support workshops. However, the course is not particularly well matched to students' needs: students taking the course tend to be those who have had a history of poor attendance and some have limited study skills. Numbers have fallen significantly to just three students currently in Year 12 and in Year 13. These have made a satisfactory start to the course and are beginning to demonstrate an understanding of basic business topics such as market research and business accounts.

204. Teaching and learning are good. Lessons are well prepared and structured with a range of activities which cover the required content and ensure students have appropriate and sufficient notes. Students work productively and co-operate well in groups. They receive good support from teachers and the majority achieve well in lessons. For example, in a good Year 12 AS-level lesson, teaching was authoritative and effective. As a result, students gained a good understanding of the work of motivation theorists. As in the main school, students' work is marked thoroughly, their progress tracked well by individual teachers and with the academic review days, where targets are discussed, they are able to know precisely what they need to do to improve. They too appreciate the support offered by teachers.

205. Leadership and management are good. There is a clear vision for developing the subject further. Staff are deployed effectively and work well as a team. Departmental performance is monitored and evaluated but not as extensively as for GCSE, and the development plan does not contain sufficiently detailed or explicit targets to measure success. There are currently no level 2 courses to provide for students of all abilities and aspirations. There has been good progress in the subject over the last three years but since the last inspection improvement has been satisfactory.

## PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND GENERAL PROGRAMMES

206. The **general studies** programme was sampled. Only two Year 12 lessons were seen and it is, therefore, not possible to evaluate provision. Teaching was satisfactory in one lesson and unsatisfactory in the other. In both lessons, students' silly behaviour and an undercurrent of chatter meant that progress was at best satisfactory. In one, the good preparation, range of activities and relationships helped to ensure that students were involved and motivated. However, work is not always challenging enough: as a result students make slow progress and lack enthusiasm for their

work. In both lessons, the unsatisfactory accommodation made teaching difficult: in one classroom the acoustics were poor and in the other the lighting was inadequate. Provision is extended well through the effective monitoring system. Here, the opportunities for sixth form students to support those in Years 11 promote personal development and responsibility well.

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

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