

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **THE SACRED HEART LANGUAGE COLLEGE**

LEA area: Harrow

Unique reference number: 102243

Headteacher: Mrs M Waplinton

Lead inspector: Mr I Matthews

Dates of inspection: 28<sup>th</sup> February - 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2005

Inspection number: 271083

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 pupils: 11 - 16  
Gender of pupils: Female  
Number on roll: 719

School address: 186 High Street  
Wealdstone  
Harrow  
Middlesex  
Postcode: HA3 7AY

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Appropriate authority: The governing body  
Name of chair of governors: Mr M Murphy

Date of previous inspection: 25<sup>th</sup> January 1999

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

The Sacred Heart Language College is a Catholic Girls' school for pupils aged 11 to 16. It was granted specialist college status in 2003. The College accepts pupils from a wide catchment area and is socially very mixed. The attainment of pupils on entry to Year 7 is above average in English, mathematics and science. The current roll is 719 pupils, which is below average for secondary schools. The roll has increased by over 270 pupils in the last five years although pupil mobility is low. The College has a wide ethnic mix of pupils with roughly one third from minority ethnic groups. Just over one tenth of pupils are from families where the mother tongue is not English. This is higher than in most schools. However, the number of pupils at an early stage of learning English is very low. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and those with a statement of special need are both broadly in line with the national average. Pupils with special needs have learning or behavioural difficulties although the school also accepts pupils with hearing, visual impairment and other physical difficulties. The proportion of pupils claiming free schools meals is in line with the national average and reflects the social diversity of the catchment. The College has developed strong links with the adjacent Salvatorian College, a Catholic Boys' School, and St Dominic's Sixth Form College. The College has recently been successfully reassessed as an Investor in People. Following a period of sustained improvement in GCSE results between the years 2001 and 2004, the College has been placed in the list of the 'top 100 improving schools' in England.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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## **REPORT CONTENTS**

	Page
<b>PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS</b>	
<b>STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS</b>	<b>8</b>
Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses	
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	
<b>QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL</b>	<b>12</b>
Teaching and learning	
The curriculum	
Care, guidance and support	
Partnership with parents, other schools and the community	
<b>LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>SUBJECTS, AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 and 4</b>	
<b>PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS</b>	<b>38</b>

## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

**The Sacred Heart Language College is a very good school.** The excellent leadership of the headteacher, strongly supported by enthusiastic staff and a very effective governing body, has resulted in a lively learning community with an outstanding ethos. The school successfully enables the pupils to become, in the school's own words '*confident young women*' and parents and pupils hold the school in very high regard. The school provides very good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are

- Pupils achieve well above average standards
- The teaching is very good; it encourages and motivates pupils
- The school challenges the pupils to succeed by having high but realistic expectations
- The school has successfully developed a strong culture for learning and very positive pupil attitudes
- Achievement in modern foreign languages, though in line with national expectations, does not match the high levels in other subjects
- Pupils do not use information and communication technology (ICT) enough in some subjects
- Subject changes to the systems for assessing pupils' work and progress and pupils' improvement targets, are not yet applied consistently

**Improvement since the last inspection is very good.** The school has successfully dealt with the key issues raised in the last report and overall standards and examination results have improved significantly.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Performance in GCSE/GNVQ examinations at the end of Year 11, compared with:	all schools			similar schools
	Year-2002	Year-2003	Year-2004	Year-2004
	A	A	A	A

Key: A - well above average; B – above average; C – average; D – below average; E – well below average

Similar schools are those whose pupils attained similarly at the end of Year 9.

**Pupils achieve very well.** Attainment on entry is above average in English, mathematics and science but is more variable in the other subjects and ranges from below to above average. At the end of Year 9, results and in the national tests have steadily improved since 2001 and are overall well above average. The overall achievement of pupils is very good and the progress made from the time they enter the school to the end of Year 9 is well above that made by pupils from similar schools. Results at GCSE are well above average and the improvement over the past four years has resulted in the school being placed in the national '100 most improved schools'. Current standards in the school reflect the examination results. With the exception of modern foreign languages, where standards and pupils' achievement matches the national expectations, in all other subjects standards are either above or well above national expectations and achievement is good or very good.

**Pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral social and cultural development are excellent.** Pupils get on very well together and with their teachers. Pupils support and encourage each other's learning. Attitudes to work and motivation are high. Pupils behave very well in lessons and around the school. Attendance is very good and punctuality is good.

### QUALITY OF EDUCATION

**The quality of education is very good.** Teaching is very good and provides pupils with stimulating and interesting experiences. This is one of the main reasons why they do so well. All pupils, whatever their need, have access to a good range of curriculum

opportunities and enrichment activities. The college places considerable emphasis on the social and academic development of pupils.

Pupils are set challenging targets for improvement. Progress is monitored well but the approach is not consistent across the departments. Lessons in ICT in Years 7 to 9 are very effective and provide pupils with a very good quality ICT experience. In Years 10 and 11 those pupils who do not take ICT as a separate examination subject fulfil the national requirements by taking ICT as part of their other subjects. However some subjects are not making sufficient use of ICT. Similar problems exist in Years 7 to 9 where in some subjects, ICT skills are not developed enough. The school has developed a college status for modern foreign languages since September 2003. This is driving school development, including the work of the school with other institutions. Links with the adjacent boys' Catholic school and local Catholic sixth form college are increasing the range of opportunities for pupils so that, for example, they can take an AS level course in religious education. Plans are in hand to increase the number of languages on offer to the pupils. A strong feature of the school is the care and welfare of the pupils. They are involved in the school through a range of very good procedures which seeks and values their views. Provision for their care, welfare, health and safety is excellent.

### **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

**Leadership is very good and management good.** The Headteacher provides excellent leadership and has a clear vision for the future direction of the school. Governance is very good and governors take a central role in supporting and monitoring the work of the school. The leadership team and staff provide very good support and are instrumental in continuing to raise standards. The school has very good systems for the development of its staff. It is outward looking, with a number of links with other local schools and colleges. The specialist college status is providing a powerful incentive for developing partnerships with other institutions. The coordination and use of ICT across the curriculum is insufficiently developed.

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

Parents and pupils express very positive views of the school. Pupils feel part of a strong and supportive school community. Parents were highly appreciative of the work of the school. The inspection agreed that these views were fully justified.

### **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

The most important things the school should do to improve are

- Improve standards in modern foreign languages so that they match those of other subjects
- Increase use of ICT in all subjects
- Ensure that the new assessment systems are used consistently

## PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

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

Standards attained in Years 7 to 9 and in Years 10 and 11 are well above average. Pupils make very good progress from the time they enter the school in Year 7 to the end of Year 9, and this continues to the end of Year 11. Overall, achievement is very good.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve very well
- Standards overall are well above average
- Examination results have been well above average for four years
- Results at GCSE have shown considerable gains since 2001 and the school is placed in the national list of '100 most improved schools'
- Standards in modern foreign languages, although in line with national expectations, do not yet match the well above average standards of most other subjects

#### Commentary

1. Pupils' attainment in English, mathematics and science above average when they join the school in Year 7. In the other subjects their standard of work is mostly average, although attainment in art is below average on entry. Results at the end of Year 9 have steadily improved since 2000 and in 2003 were well above average. In 2004 they remained well above average overall, in spite of a decline in mathematics and science compared with the 2003 results. The school just missed its ambitious targets in mathematics and science but met them for English. Compared with similar schools in 2004, mathematics and science were above average and results in English were very high.
2. The table shows results at the end of Year 9 in 2004. Final national comparisons are not yet available but the school has continued to show well above average results in comparison with the provisional national figures.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	36.8 (37.1)	[na] (33.4)
mathematics	36.7 (38.4)	[na] (35.4)
science	34.5 (37.3)	[na] (33.6)

*There were 150 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

3. Standard of work seen in English, geography, history, mathematics and science and were well above average. Standards in other subjects were above average and in art and modern foreign languages standards were average. Achievement between Years 7 and 9 overall is very good, with pupils making much better progress than would normally be expected.
4. Results at the end of Year 11 have been rising significantly since 2001 when just over half of pupils got five or more of the higher grades A\* to C. In 2004 the figure had risen to over three quarters of all pupils, which exceeded the school's ambitious target. This improvement placed the school in the top 100 improving schools in England.



The table shows the change in results from 2003 to 2004 in comparison with the national figures.  
**Standards in GCSE/GNVQ examinations at the end of Year 11 in 2004**

	School results	National results
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	77 (72)	52 (52)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	95 (98)	89 (88)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	98 (100)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	43.2 (42.3)	34.9 (34.7)

*There were 127 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

5. GCSE results in art and design, the design and technology subjects, history, mathematics, RE and science, were all significantly above the national average. Drama and German were below average. Pupils did much better overall at GCSE than might have been expected from their standard of work when they joined the school in Year 7.
6. The standards of work seen in most subjects were well above average and reflected the high results. Geography and music were above average and modern foreign languages, average. Standards in GCSE PE were well above average and in non examination PE, above average.
7. Pupils' competence in language and literacy is well above average. They use language well in written work and in discussion. Pupils are confident and articulate speakers who listen to the opinions of others. Most subject teachers emphasise the use of key words and provide opportunities for pupils to develop their literacy skills. This practice is not wholly consistent across all classes.
8. Competence in the use of mathematical skills is well above average. Teachers of all subjects have been made aware of the importance of emphasising numeracy. An audit has taken place identifying where and when numeracy topics are covered.
9. Pupils' competence in ICT at the end of Year 9 is above average and those who continue with the ICT vocational GCSE course reach standards which are well above average. Pupils who do not take ICT as an examination subject in Years 10 and 11 achieve average standards. This is because some subjects are not making enough use ICT and also because access to computers is limited.
10. Pupils who have special educational needs achieve very well. Many of them experience difficulties with literacy skills. A small number of the pupils have specific or moderate learning difficulties. Teachers ensure that appropriate teaching strategies and resources are used. Learning support assistants provide effective help for these pupils. Pupils who have statements of need also make very good progress. An appropriate mixture of support in lessons together with some withdrawal from lessons and a very good appreciation of their problems from most teaching staff, are critical factors in ensuring that pupils do very well.
11. The school carefully identifies those pupils who are particularly gifted or talented and monitors their progress assiduously using a balance of performance data and teachers' judgements. As a result of this thorough approach, gifted and talented pupils achieve very well. In addition to the provision made in individual subjects, there are some good whole-school initiatives to stimulate and challenge these pupils. In particular, the School participates in a private/state school venture with North London Collegiate School which helps raise the aspirations of the pupils.
12. Pupils with English as an additional language achieve as well as other pupils and provision for them is very appropriate to their needs.

**Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities**

Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good. Their personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are excellent. Attendance is very good and punctuality is good.

## Main strengths

- Pupils develop exceptionally well into mature and confident young women who display a strong commitment to the values of fairness, respect and care for others
- Pupils' dedicated approach to learning is a significant factor contributing to their very good achievement
- Pupils' high standards of behaviour mean that learning is very effective
- Attendance has improved since the last inspection and is currently well above average

## Commentary

13. Pupils demonstrate to a very high level the personal qualities implicit in the school's aim of 'Confident Young Women' within a strong Catholic ethos. Girls in Year 7 very quickly feel settled and become full members of the school community. Pupils in Year 9 speak movingly about the importance of faith as the defining value of the school community, which they experienced, for example, in last year's school mission. The girls develop a very strong sense of justice and are able to debate moral issues, for example when considering the paradox of the statue of Christ in Rio de Janeiro facing away from the poor shanty town area. Pupils across the school raise significant sums of money for charity, including for the recent tsunami disaster appeal which they organised on their own initiative.
14. Pupils' social skills are greatly enhanced by the extra-curricular activities in sport and music, as well as the many opportunities to work in pairs and small groups in lessons. The girls highly value the benefits of being in a language college where they have many opportunities to travel abroad and experience different cultures. History makes a powerful contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development by providing planned opportunities for pupils to learn about and discuss a wide range of issues, such as *Empire and Migration* which builds on pupils' research into their own families. By Year 11, the girls have become very good role models for the younger pupils and demonstrate high levels of responsibility and care through their involvement as form prefects and trained personal counsellors in the 'Heart to Heart' project. They are extremely well prepared for life in the much more mixed community of the sixth form college to which most transfer.
15. Pupils' attitudes to learning were very good in the majority of lessons and were excellent in about a fifth of them. This strength enables the teachers to teach and the pupils to make very good progress in their learning. Girls from all ethnic backgrounds and of all abilities take their studies very seriously and usually waste little time in settling down to the tasks in hand. In the very best lessons, the pupils are highly attentive and concentrate hard. They are very willing to ask for help because they want to achieve the best they can and are confident that the teacher will provide the support they need. They work very well together but are also very good at working independently. They carry out their homework conscientiously. Very occasionally, pupils' attitudes in lessons were less than positive, for example where teaching was less well planned, but even then achievement was at least satisfactory.
16. Pupils with special educational needs have very positive attitudes to lessons. They are confident they will succeed because they have effective support from all staff. Pupils have very good relationships with other pupils and with members of staff.
17. Behaviour is very good throughout the school day. It is excellent in assemblies when pupils respond with very high levels of respect for the occasion of gathering together for prayer and reflection. The girls cope very well with the difficulties of moving along the narrow corridors and eating in a cramped dining room. They are very confident that bullying and racism are not problems at the school and that any issues are very swiftly dealt with. Lessons are very rarely impeded by any behavioural problems. The school has recently reviewed its behaviour management policy and procedures which provide a very well

thought-out and structured framework for its 'zero tolerance' approach to any misbehaviour. Most girls believe this is a fair system.

18. The school's philosophy of valuing each individual is put into practice in its reluctance to exclude permanently any pupil. Last year the number of fixed period exclusions was quite high, mainly because of particular social and emotional problems exhibited by a small group of girls in Year 11 from a range of ethnic groups. Very good use was made of the school counsellor, educational social worker and a learning consultant of Caribbean heritage to support these pupils and ensure that they achieved at least some GCSE passes. So far this year, the rate of fixed period exclusions has returned to the school's usually low level. Pupils are excluded for appropriate reasons and for very short periods, and rarely have to be excluded more than once. The school records exclusions very carefully and is highly alert to any patterns that emerge.

**Ethnic background of pupils**

**Exclusions in the last school year**

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	427	32	0
White – Irish	73	6	0
White – any other White background	29	1	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	3	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	10	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	12	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	14	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	42	1	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	54	6	0
Black or Black British – African	37	6	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	6	0	0
Chinese	4	0	0
Any other ethnic group	4	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	4	0	0

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

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

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	6.7	School data	0.1
National data	6.9	National data	1.1

*The table gives the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for 2003 – 2004.*

19. Attendance is better than it was at the last inspection when rates were in line with the national average. In 2003/4 attendance was above the national average with very little unauthorised absence. It has improved further so far this year and is currently over 94 per cent. Pupils' very good attendance means that they are able to make the most of the opportunities provided by the school. The school has very good systems for monitoring and following up absence. Teaching and administrative staff work very closely with the Education Welfare Officer and the Travellers Service to ensure that pupils attend as frequently as possible. Parents support the school's expectations very well. Punctuality is very good at the start of the day but the beginnings of lessons are sometimes delayed because pupils arrive late from the previous lesson.



## THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided by the school is very good. The very positive attitudes and behaviour of the pupils and very effective teaching which motivates and stimulates pupils to learn have together produced a learning community dedicated to high achievement. The curriculum effectively meets the needs of all the pupils. They are supported very well by a very effective pastoral system and staff committed to helping them in their personal and academic development. The language college status has not yet had a full impact, although the developing links with other institutions, including the adjacent Catholic boys' school and the Catholic sixth form college are widening the opportunities for pupils.

### Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are very good overall and in all subjects there are examples of very good, sometimes excellent practice. Assessment is good.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have very good subject knowledge and successfully communicate their enthusiasm for the subject to the pupils
- The strong rapport between teachers and pupils encourages pupils to learn well
- Lessons are very well planned, containing a range of timed, different activities which hold pupils attention
- Teachers closely monitor pupils' progress and some subjects use the school assessment system very effectively
- In some subjects the school assessment system is not used as well as it could be and pupils do not have as clear a picture of what they need to do to improve

### Commentary

20. Over eight out of ten of all lessons seen were good or better with an unusually high proportion of excellent lessons. The very effective teaching resulted in high pupil concentration and led to rapid progress. On the very rare occasions where planning was less rigorous, some pupils misbehaved and learning was affected.

#### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 119 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
11 (9.2%)	39 (32.8%)	49 (41.2%)	18 (15.1%)	2 (1.7%)	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.*

21. Teaching is very good in English, science, design and technology, history, ICT and PE. In almost all other subjects teaching is good and it is satisfactory in modern foreign languages. All subjects had examples of lessons where the planning was based on high expectations of what the pupils could achieve and led to rapid progress. An excellent French lesson demonstrated many of the ingredients of the best lessons. Pupils were greeted at the door, there was intensive use of French, and the teacher constantly checked pupils understanding and modified the approach during the course of the lesson. Each activity was carefully timed, pupils' attention was held, they were constantly engaged and their achievement was excellent.
22. Teachers were enthusiastic and knowledgeable about their subjects and in most lessons effectively communicated this enthusiasm. As a result the pupils were motivated to learn. Pupils in a Year 10 class were working on part of the 'Youth Award' scheme. They had learned about food pyramids and had assessed their own diets to see how they could be improved. The subject knowledge of the teacher, excellent planning and rapport with the group, led pupils to a very good understanding of nutrition. Pupils were very well motivated, their quality of discussion and questioning was excellent and their standard of written work

was much higher than usual. The pupils concentrated fully during the lesson and made excellent progress.

23. Most lessons start well with a warm up activity before moving quickly onto the main part of the lesson. Very occasionally, the lesson objectives are not always made clear and as a result, pupils cannot evaluate what they have learned. Also the final plenary session is sometimes curtailed so that pupils do not have a full opportunity to completely review what they have learned. In a very small number of lessons, the planning is not sufficiently rigorous to ensure continuous engagement of the pupils and some weaker learning results. Very rarely this can lead to unsatisfactory lessons.
24. Homework is set regularly. It is relevant to the work being covered and the school is meticulous about checking whether homework has been done and taking appropriate action if it is not.
25. The school has recently purchased a number of interactive white boards. In many lessons these are being well used. In some lessons however, lack of confidence of the teachers results in limited use of what is clearly a very good additional aid for stimulating pupils to learn.
26. All pupils have target levels or grades in each subject and they are assessed against these three times per term. Consequently, pupils who underachieve are identified by subject teachers. This is an effective school system. There are some inconsistencies in the ways in which these targets are used in normal lessons. For instance in French in Years 7 to 9, tests are marked and give results in the form of national curriculum levels. However in day to day work, assessment does not relate to levels and does not give pupils a clear enough understanding of how they need to improve to reach the target. Similarly In mathematics, pupils are not sufficiently informed of what they need to do to reach a specific level. Departments where the systems are used well include history and English. Design and technology has very effective systems for assessment that are highly appropriate to the subject although these do not conform to the school system. Overall assessment is good.
27. Pupils with special educational needs are taught very well in most subjects. Procedures for identifying their needs are very thorough and a wide range of teaching activities and resources are used to meet these needs. In a Year 9 history lesson pupils made good progress because a range of activities and resources were particularly relevant and accessible to these pupils. In a Year 10 travel and tourism lesson, pupils made very good progress in learning how to conduct themselves at a job interview. Support from well informed and effective learning support assistants is a significant factor in the very good progress made by these pupils. An effective system of withdrawal ensures that pupils whose basic literacy skills are below the national average are given appropriate help to improve these skills. In the few lessons where pupils did not make appropriate progress work was not effectively matched to pupils' needs.
28. Arrangements for assessing, recording and reporting the progress of pupils with special educational needs are good and meet statutory requirements. Individual education plans are not yet used consistently by all staff to set subject specific targets.
29. Pupils who are gifted and talented are taught very well and are given appropriate and challenging work. They respond well to the enthusiasm and expertise of their teachers. There are very few pupils who are at an early stage of learning English but the very good quality of teaching ensures that these pupils are able to make similar progress to other pupils.

### **The curriculum**

The curriculum is good, all statutory requirements are met and the provision for enrichment is good. The school has expanded its programme to include vocational courses in Years 10 and 11. There is also an AS level course in religious studies for pupils who wish to start A-



level studies early. Staffing is good, and resources and accommodation overall are satisfactory although there is some unsatisfactory accommodation.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum provides well for the full range of pupils in the school
- The provision for the personal development of pupils is good through weekly lessons which cover citizenship and personal, social and health education
- Opportunities for enrichment are good particularly in the arts and sport, and also include additional subject based classes including some at the weekend
- Preparation for later stages of education, including careers advice is very good
- On site accommodation for PE is unsatisfactory, as is the accommodation for dining
- There are no checks to ensure that pupils in Years 10 and 11 who do not take an ICT examination course, develop all the necessary ICT skills and knowledge

## Commentary

30. The curriculum provides well for the needs of the pupils. It meets all the necessary statutory provision and has been expanded to include appropriate aspects of work related learning, including vocational subjects in ICT and in travel and tourism. Although the specialist college status has not yet had a full impact, the range of languages on offer is wider than in many similarly sized schools and the school has plans to expand this provision in the future in conjunction with its partner institutions. The recent introduction of an AS level course in religious education has provided a further opportunity for the pupils.
31. There is some relative weakness in the provision for art in Years 7 to 9 where single periods often do not provide enough teaching time. The accommodation for PE in Years 10 and 11, whilst very good for activities suited to the school site, cannot provide pupils with the full range of activities which they need. ICT for pupils who do not take an examination course in Years 10 and 11 is not yet well enough embedded in other subjects and access to computers is limited.
32. There is very good provision for personal, social and health education. The course, starting in Year 7 successfully covers issues relevant to adolescent pupils in drug and relationships education and helping them make informed choices about their own lives and future careers. Detailed careers guidance commences in Year 9 and pupils in Year 10 have a wide choice of work experience opportunities which help them make informed choices about careers and the workplace.
33. There is a rich and varied programme of learning outside the school day where pupils attend lunchtime, after school and Saturday sessions to extend their learning. Peer mentoring takes place through a scheme called *Heart to Heart*, where the mentors are trained by the school counsellor and chaplain. Extra-curricular activities such as the choir, orchestra, dance, a range of sporting fixtures and a debating society add to the wide experiences the girls are able to receive.
34. The curriculum for pupils with special educational needs including those with a statement is good. All pupils receive their curriculum entitlement either by full participation in normal lessons or when appropriate, through sessions where they are withdrawn from normal classes to receive special help. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 who have difficulty accessing some areas of the main curriculum have opportunities to participate in a vocational course and a basic skills course where they achieve recognised national vocational qualifications. Pupils have individual education plans which are carefully monitored, although the recording of progress by learning support staff is not consistent. The good curriculum provision, and the effective way in which their needs are met, ensure that pupils with special educational needs make very good progress.
35. Accommodation is satisfactory. School buildings are well maintained, clean and free from litter and provide a welcoming environment for learning. There is an accessibility plan which is gradually being implemented. The science department has mainly traditional laboratories not always appropriate for modern approaches to teaching. The library is satisfactorily

resourced and provides an inviting area for pupils to work in. An upgrade of the modern foreign language rooms has greatly improved the provision in this area. The addition of a new block containing specialist facilities for technology, music, art and ICT provides very good resources for these subjects. There is no separate sports hall or school field on which to play games and pupils have to travel to local playing fields and a sports centre. As a result on site accommodation for PE limits the range of activities and is unsatisfactory. The canteen is an inadequate space for the number of girls in the school even when the hall is used as an overspill area.

36. The provision of resources within departments varies but is adequate to support the very good quality of education in the school. The level of computer provision and usage was a concern expressed in the last report and this remains a weakness. The recently installed interactive white boards are used to a varying degree by teachers in different areas of the curriculum. The school is appropriately staffed. Teachers are well qualified and learning support and administrative staff provide effective help in and out of the classroom.

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

The school makes excellent provision to ensure pupils' health, safety and welfare during their time in school. It provides them with very good support and guidance. Pupils speak highly of the supportive and caring ethos of the school and are thoroughly involved in its development.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Excellent procedures promote the health, safety and welfare of pupils
- Pupils comment very positively on the supportive and caring ethos of school
- New pupils are made to feel welcome when they arrive and receive very good support and guidance as they progress through the school
- Procedures for identifying and supporting under-achieving pupils are very effective
- Pupils are involved very well in the school's work and development

### **Commentary**

37. The school has excellent procedures for ensuring that the school environment is safe and healthy for pupils and staff. This is achieved by regular health and safety inspections where any potential problems are listed with points for action which are implemented promptly. Departments undertake appropriate and clearly documented risk assessments. Child protection systems are well established and run very effectively by an experienced deputy headteacher. All staff, including non-teaching staff, have recently received relevant training. A part-time counsellor provides support for pupils experiencing difficulties and pupils know that they can make appointments themselves.
38. Pupils in all year groups talk positively about the school and in particular about the very good supportive ethos. For example, Year 7 pupils say that the school is friendly and that they feel safe. Year 8 pupils say that they like coming to school, that there is no bullying and that the older pupils help the younger ones. Pupils in Year 10 feel encouraged to express views in lessons and to develop their talents. Year 11 pupils say that their teachers are helpful and encouraging and that it is "easy to say if you don't understand something". The *Heart to Heart* peer mentoring system is now well embedded in the life of the school, and provides a very good first point of contact for pupils who want an opportunity to talk about a problem. It also offers very good opportunities for older pupils to take on a responsible and caring role.
39. Pupils feel that they are made to feel welcome when they arrive in Year 7. The school has a very well developed induction programme for new pupils including taster visits for Year 5 pupils. When the time comes to choosing GCSE options there are suitable opportunities for discussion at parents' evenings and pupils are guided towards a balanced set of subjects. Every pupil has an individual careers interview and receives impartial guidance for choices

at 16+. Pupils feel well supported by these arrangements and also like the fact that they can meet representatives from a variety of local colleges when planning the next stage of their education.

40. Recently revised assessment procedures provide teachers with comprehensive information about pupils' progress, although some inconsistencies in procedure still exist. Pupils feel that they receive good information on how they are progressing in different subjects. For example Year 11 pupils spoke about the lengthy and helpful comments on their work in English, history and mathematics. In addition, a tracking system is very effective in identifying pupils who are not making the effort or progress which is expected of them, or who are falling behind with homework. Year coordinators make very good use of this information to follow up and support pupils as necessary.
41. Senior pupils in Year 11 have worked very successfully with the new deputy headteacher to raise the profile of the school council and the importance of the 'pupil voice'. The school council is becoming increasingly effective as a vehicle for pupils to put forward their views and to be involved in projects to improve the school, such as the recent appointment of a deputy headteacher and improving the quality of food in the canteen. Year 7 and Year 8 pupils are now fully represented, which is an improvement since the last inspection. Pupils are very pleased at the way in which the school responded swiftly to their concerns, expressed in a school council survey last term, about the lack of locks and soap in the toilets. Their views are often sought in lessons and they are involved well in assessing their own and each other's work. Nevertheless, a significant minority of pupils still do not feel that the school takes sufficient account of their views, for example, in relation to the school dress code, although the current mechanisms are now providing very good opportunities for these views to be expressed.

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

Links with parents, other schools and colleges are very good. Links with the community are good.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Parents are very satisfied with the school and support their children's learning very well
- The school has developed very productive links with schools and colleges which benefit the pupils, particularly at the times of transfer
- Very good business links enhance the work-related curriculum

### **Commentary**

42. Parents are very pleased to be able to send their daughters to The Sacred Heart College and highly value what it provides and achieves for their children. Their support for their children's education and the school's values is a significant factor in the pupils' very good achievement, both academically and in their personal development. Parents contribute very significant sums of money to the Governors' Fund which finances major developments in the school. The parents' association is developing well as a vehicle for parents to get more involved, such as advising other parents when their children are preparing to come to the school in Year 7 or transferring to the sixth form college after Year 11. Although there is no formal mechanism for consulting parents, the parents are rightly confident that any concerns they raise are treated seriously and acted upon.
43. Parents are given very good information about the school, for example in the year group handbooks which include considerable detail about what their children will be studying. The half-termly newsletters celebrate pupils' achievements very effectively as well as give useful information about events. The website, however, is an underdeveloped resource for keeping parents informed and involved. Parents are kept well informed about their children's progress toward their target levels and grades. Reports to parents, which were a

key issue at the last inspection, have improved and now give clear and specific comments about pupils' strengths and areas for development. They are particularly good in Year 11 where, for example parents are informed very well about how their daughter did in the mock examinations and where more attention is needed. However reports in other years are confusing in the way in which they report pupils' attainment because a mixture of grading systems are used.

44. The school is very active in a number of partnerships with other schools in the area. It has very good links with its feeder primary schools which ensure a smooth transfer for pupils into Year 7. Teachers from modern foreign languages, science and physical education make a significant contribution to primary education by teaching in local schools. Under its remit as a specialist language college, the school has carried out an audit of needs and work has begun with two primary schools. As part of this provision, an outreach teacher is employed to work with partner primary schools to deliver a tailored programme of modern foreign language teaching. Teachers in the partner schools are developing their skills so that they can take over this teaching. The approach is a model of very effective practice. The Sacred Heart works very effectively with the adjacent Catholic school for boys and with the Catholic sixth form college in the planning of pathways and joint courses in the 14-19 curriculum. Some partnership work has been done in modern foreign languages and there are well-documented plans for further development. Arrangements for the transfer of girls to post-16 education are very good. Valuable links with a number of independent schools provide extra opportunities for gifted and talented pupils to be challenged and gain confidence in their abilities. Pupils' cultural development is enhanced by the school's international links through the *Comenius* project with schools in Austria and Slovakia.
45. The school has adapted its strong business links very well to meet the changing demands of the curriculum. Links are used very successfully to enable pupils to learn about employment, for example in the new travel and tourism course and in design and technology. There are close links with the parish, and pupils benefit from the 'Catholic family' values which they experience both within and outside school. Links with the community, through visits and visitors, are used well to enhance the curriculum in English and history. In other subjects, links are limited.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

The headteacher provides excellent leadership and has a clear vision for the future development of the school. Very effective governors play a significant part in driving and supporting the vision and monitoring the work of the school. The leadership team and staff provide very good support and are instrumental in continuing to raise standards. The school meets all the necessary statutory obligations. Overall, the quality of leadership is very good and that of management, good.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The headteacher has generated a strong team spirit and a clear sense of direction
- Governors are very well informed, very involved and highly supportive of the school's ethos and goals
- High priority is given to staff development, a key factor in the school's success
- Budgets have been planned prudently and operated efficiently to eliminate a previous deficit whilst improving educational standards
- Good management has significantly raised standards; there are opportunities to improve the coordination of ICT across the curriculum and the development of modern foreign languages

### **Commentary**

46. Governors are highly ambitious for the school and its development as a language college. They strongly support the religious principles that underpin the life of the school and carry

out their responsibilities very conscientiously. Their combined experience, expertise and teamwork are key strengths, enabling them to play a rigorous but supportive role in helping the school meet its aims. A strong committee structure and regular visits to the school enable governors to get a very accurate feel for how the school operates on a day-to-day basis and they develop a good understanding for the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They have undertaken a very thorough analysis of their own effectiveness and this has helped them to fulfil their own training needs.

47. The headteacher has very high aspirations for the school and these are reflected in very good strategic planning. She expresses very strongly the belief that the catholic faith is at the heart of the school's ethos. She is an excellent role model for staff. Above all else the headteacher believes that all pupils deserve the best and need to develop as '*confident young women*'. The headteacher is a tenacious problem-solver and does not shirk difficult decisions on matters such as staff competency, the management of the increase in pupil numbers and the previous budget deficit. She actively encourages teamwork and when appropriate, the delegation of leadership and management responsibilities.
48. The extended leadership team, supported by other key staff is very effective because they have roles that reflect individual strengths, with particular briefs for whole-school responsibilities and the management of subjects. They have a high profile around the school so pupils, staff and parents have considerable respect for their leadership.
49. The quality of management is good overall and this has resulted in standards rising to well above average. The significant increase in the school role has been very well managed. The management of the links with the Salvatorian College and St Dominic's Sixth Form College are also very good. The improvements to teaching and learning have been very well managed. Most subjects are well-managed and several are very well-managed. However, some areas of management could be improved. For example ICT is not well-enough co-ordinated across subjects, particularly in Years 10 and 11, to check that all pupils have sufficient experience of ICT. Some subjects are not using it enough to enhance teaching and learning. In modern languages the impact of the language college has not been as great with local secondary schools as it has been with the primary schools. Standards have not risen in modern languages to the extent that they have in other subjects. The new assessment system is being used effectively in subjects like history and English but has yet to be introduced or embedded in some others.
50. The school has good systems for monitoring data and using it to review performance. Individual pupil performance is analysed very well and compared against targets. Good analysis is done to investigate links between achievement and attendance and ethnicity. The information from the analysis is increasingly being used to identify strengths and weaknesses and to take appropriate action to further raise standards.
51. Performance management has been fully embraced by staff and is at an advanced stage of implementation. It includes self-evaluation and the setting of personal and departmental targets for everyone. Performance management is an integral part of the school's strategic plan. Training needs are clearly identified in relation to individuals, teams and whole-school aspects. In addition to regular school based training, staff are strongly encouraged to achieve recognised qualifications and to act as consultants. This very structured approach to training has been instrumental in improving the performance of teachers and support staff, and in raising pupils' standards. The school was recently re-accredited an Investor in People.
52. Programmes for newly qualified teachers and those doing initial teacher training are very well structured, with weekly in-house training sessions and input from the leadership team and subject heads of department. The attraction of a high performing school aids staff

recruitment and retention. Support staff are deployed well and together with the capable team of administrative staff, has enabled effective workforce reform for teachers.

53. The school uses the principles of best value well to evaluate its success and plan for future developments. The strategic vision is effectively translated into effective short term plans which are well managed and implemented. The very good financial management is based on careful planning and centred on the schools key objective to raise pupil standards. Plans are evaluated and costed and discussed with governors and key staff. Day to day financial management is very efficient and meets the requirements of the audit. Expenditure is assessed against national benchmarks. The budget deficit problems of previous years have been overcome.

**Financial information for the Year April 2003 to 2004**

Income and Expenditure	(£)
Total income	2482296
Total expenditure	2412923
Expenditure per pupil	3437

Balances	(£)
Balances from previous year	40075
Balances carried forward to the next year	69373

54. The management of support for learning is very effective. Regular monitoring of individual education plans and weekly meetings between the special educational co-ordinator and learning support assistants are a significant factor in the good progress made by pupils. A team of well deployed learning support staff have a clear understanding of their responsibilities. The governing body fulfils statutory requirements and a named governor is well informed and supportive.

## **OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES**

### **Work related learning**

The provision for work related learning is good.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Year 10 students go on a work placement that is tailored to their individual aspirations and preferences
- The school has established very good links with local employers
- The different elements and strands of the work related curriculum are not fully coordinated
- There are advanced plans to extend work placements in ways that reflect the school's specialist status

### **Commentary**

55. Work related learning is effectively meeting the girls' needs and aspirations for further study and employment. The wide range of opportunities offered within the curriculum is very successful and provide a secure platform for future development.
56. The tasks of overseeing and coordinating the different strands of work related learning are still in the early stages. As a result, governors and senior staff do not have a complete overview of all developments. Some strands are extremely well established and run very successfully. Amongst these are the courses with a vocational focus, travel and tourism, the ASDAN Youth Award and the double award vocational ICT. In these courses there is a strong practical element and in the lessons seen teaching and learning were very strong and achievement very good.
57. Students are well prepared and have a good understanding of enterprise and employability. There are opportunities for them to demonstrate initiative, for example through the school council and the prefect system. A programme of mock interviews was also felt to be beneficial by those pupils who took-up the opportunities provided for them. The citizenship programme makes a significant contribution to pupils' readiness for the next stage of their education, employment or study. A particularly good example was seen in a lesson where the lesson focused on employment rights and the role of trade unions.
58. Careers education is an area of particular strength and the work experience programme is very effectively led and managed. The school has established very good contacts with the local business community so work placements for Year 10 pupils can be closely matched to individual preferences and aspirations. Parents and pupils are very appreciative of the chance to gain first hand experience of a work environment. When pupils return to school they are taught to reflect on the experience, for example during assemblies or in the work set in English lessons.
59. There are plans to strengthen the connections between work, employment and the school's specialist language status, by providing work experience within organisations that conduct their work in a foreign language. The school has been successful in starting to implement work related learning.



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

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

#### ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

##### English

Provision in English is very good.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Well above average	Well above average
Achievement	Very good	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good	Very good
Leadership	Very good	
Management	Very good	
Progress since the last inspection	Very good	

##### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results at the end of Year 9 and Year 11 are well above national averages
- Very good leadership ensures that there is a strong and consistent direction in the school
- Relationships in English lessons are very good and pupils show an impressive commitment to their studies
- Pupils do not have systematic, planned access to Information Communication Technology
- In modern foreign language lessons, pupils receive insufficiently detailed guidance on how to use new skills

##### Commentary

##### Examination results

60. In the national tests taken at the end of Year 9 in 2004 results were well above the national average and very high in comparison with results in similar schools. This continued the trend of recent years.
61. In the GCSE examinations in 2004, results in both English and English Literature were significantly above the national average. The percentage of pupils gaining an A grade was much higher in English Literature than in English. In both subjects there has been an upward trend in results over the last five years.

##### Standards and achievement

62. When pupils enter the school they are of above average attainment in English. Their results show very good achievement. This achievement derives from teachers' high expectations and the commitment of the girls. From Year 7, pupils read demanding literature and are taught the skills of close reading. This early familiarity with difficult language contributes to the development of pupils' writing skills so that, by the time they reach Year 11, most are capable of writing mature, lengthy, accurate and well-reasoned pieces. Their essays on literature are of a particularly high standard. For example, work on "Wuthering Heights" shows insight into plot, character and language, whilst work on poetry reveals ability to link language, form and meaning. Standards of speaking and listening are well above average. Girls are confident and articulate speakers who listen with respect to the opinions of others.
63. Pupils with special educational needs achieve very well, partly because the teachers structure lessons very logically and partly because of the very well judged guidance provided by learning support assistants.

## **Teaching and learning**

64. The overall standard of teaching is very good. Teachers know their subject very well and plan lessons very thoroughly, making their purposes apparent to the pupils. Plans build very well on what pupils already know. Lessons are conducted briskly. Because teachers show evident concern for the progress of individuals, relationships in English lessons are very good and pupils have the confidence to participate fully. They show high levels of concentration. On occasion, lower attaining pupils are not given sufficient examples of the techniques they are expected to use; they then need more individual help to grasp unfamiliar concepts. Appropriate homework is set regularly.
65. Teachers assess pupils' work accurately in terms of National Curriculum levels or likely GCSE grades. Girls know their current level or predicted grade and understand how to improve. There are some limited opportunities for girls to assess their own work in terms of levels or grades. Most marking offers detailed and helpful guidance on how the standard of work could be improved, but practice in this respect is not consistent.
66. Pupils' ability to undertake certain types of research, to present their work in a variety of ways and to draft and edit text is limited because they do not have systematic, planned access to information and communication technology.

## **Leadership and management**

67. Standards in English have risen steadily during a period in which there have been a number of staffing changes. The current acting leadership of the subject shows a very strong commitment to raising standards further. There is a clear sense of direction, very good organisation and very effective teamwork. Planning is rooted in a robust understanding of the department's strengths and areas to be developed, as well as in a thorough analysis of the pupils' abilities and their needs.
68. The last inspection report described the overall quality of teaching as good. It is now very good. Over the same period of time, results at GCSE in both English and English Literature have risen from being in line with national averages to being well above national averages. The standard of pupils' written work has improved significantly. Improvement since the last inspection is thus very good.

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

69. Pupils possess language and literacy skills that are well above average. They are confident and articulate speakers who listen with respect to the opinions of others. In history, for example, they demonstrate an ability to explain their ideas and take different viewpoints, whilst in science they formulate answers in complete sentences rather than in single words or short phrases. In their written work girls show the capacity to write at length and with due attention to spelling, punctuation and grammar.
70. Across the range of subjects, the contribution to the development of literacy skills although satisfactory overall, is varied. Most subject teachers identify and emphasise key specialist vocabulary and provide opportunities for pupils to improve their literacy skills, although practice in this respect is not consistent.
71. The school's overall approach is strongly influenced by the national strategy for raising the attainment of younger secondary pupils (the Key Stage 3 Strategy). Through this strategy helpful training for staff has been provided and a systematic approach is being developed. The school library provides sound support for the encouragement of a love of reading.

## **Modern foreign languages**

The school provides courses in French, German and Spanish. All pupils start French in Year 7 and take French and German in Year 8. Most pupils continue with French and

German in Year 9 before opting for one or more of the languages in Years 10 and 11. A small number of pupils take Spanish in Years 10 and 11, which is taught in two after school classes.

Provision in modern foreign languages is satisfactory.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Average	Average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Good
Leadership	Satisfactory	
Management	Satisfactory	
Progress since the last inspection	Unsatisfactory	

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils behave very well and have good attitudes to learning
- Pupils do not achieve as well in GCSE examinations as they do in other subjects
- Current standards in Year 11 are better than the recent GCSE results
- Pupils' skills in listening comprehension are developed well, but pupils are not doing as well as they could in speaking
- The very good range of trips and visits are appreciated by pupils and have well planned educational aims
- Inconsistencies in the quality of teaching are holding back standards particularly in

Years 7 to 9

### Commentary

#### Examination results

72. Pupils enter the school with minimal knowledge of a foreign language. Teachers' assessments for pupils in Year 9 were similar to the national average. In the 2004 GCSE examinations, overall results in French were close to the national average for girls. In German, they were below the national average. In both languages pupils did significantly less well than in the other subjects they took.

#### Standards and achievement

73. Most pupils take French and German in Years 7 to 9 and standards in both languages are in line with national expectations. Listening skills are developed well because pupils hear their teachers speaking a lot of French and German. However, standards in speaking are lower because the opportunities for pupils to speak French or German are more limited. A lot of day-to-day work is pitched at a relatively simple level, although the assessment tests are more demanding. Overall levels of achievement are satisfactory.
74. Standards in Years 10 and 11 in both French and German, show improvement on last year's GCSE results with standards in German matching national averages. Pupils in Year 11 take modular courses and the marks they have gained so far show satisfactory achievement. Pupils in higher sets produce some good extended writing with suitable variety of vocabulary and meet the criteria for higher GCSE grades. The written work of pupils in the lower band is often considerably less accurate and detailed, and below the standards indicated by target grades. Standards in listening are generally better than in speaking. For example a Year 11 German class could pick out key points from a very demanding tape recording of a native speaker. However, pupils' contributions in speaking are often hesitant, and very brief. Pupils following the after-school Spanish course are progressing well and achieving above average standards.
75. The behaviour and attitudes of pupils overall are very good, leading to a positive working atmosphere in almost every language lesson. However at times, pupils are not engaged as well as they could be by speaking French or German.

#### Teaching and learning

76. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and is good at GCSE level although this has not yet had a full impact on improving standards beyond the national average. A key strength throughout is the consistent way teachers speak in the appropriate foreign language nearly all the time. This is a significant aid in developing pupils' listening skills. All pupils have regular opportunities to work in the multi-media language laboratory, helping to foster listening and reading skills in particular. Games are sometimes used well; for example a Year 9 class competed to see which group of pupils could pronounce a sentence best. Foreign language assistants complement the work of teachers, and are deployed effectively. For older pupils, tasks are carefully matched to the requirements of the examination. However, in many lessons there are not enough planned opportunities for pupils to practise independent speaking. Pupils are not sufficiently challenged to speak from memory except at the very end of lessons. In addition, lesson planning in Years 7 to 9 does not consistently take account of the national curriculum level descriptors and as a result work is not always well enough matched to pupils' potential.
77. Good, well managed arrangements have been made to assess pupils' work formally at regular intervals. Pupils have a clear understanding of how they are doing at GCSE because they get grades for each module. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 get helpful information from their test results. However, in day-to day work, marking is not giving pupils in this age range a sufficiently accurate picture of how they are doing and what they need to do to improve.

### **Leadership and management**

78. Leadership and management are both satisfactory because there is a clear vision and understanding of what needs to be done. There are significant areas for further development and current strategies are beginning to have a positive impact. Good work has been done in revising schemes of work, promoting the three part lesson structure and developing the programme of visits abroad. The department has identified the need to develop pupils' speaking and written skills and also to increase the range of teaching styles used for pupils in Years 7 to 9. These developments and the good teaching in Years 10 and 11 are not yet improving GCSE examination results beyond the national average.
79. The curriculum has been enhanced by the provision of Spanish, and two groups of pupils have made a long-term commitment to study for GCSE through after school lessons. The provision of short trips and longer visits is very good. Pupils appreciate these opportunities as they do the links with other schools and the use of native speakers to enhance learning. The activities support language learning and wider cultural education very well. As part of the wider language college provision, very good links have been established with two primary schools.
80. Although the language college status is providing a good impetus for development, since the last inspection, examination results have declined and thus improvement overall is unsatisfactory.

### **MATHEMATICS**

Provision in mathematics is good.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Well above average	Well above average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good
Leadership	Good	
Management	Good	

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards and results at the end of Year 11 are well above average
- Pupils have positive attitudes and work hard in response to the teachers' good subject knowledge, encouragement and support
- Girls achieve well, particularly when they are encouraged to work collaboratively
- Marking and other feedback to pupils does not give them enough information on how to progress to the next level or grade
- Pupils are not always told the lesson objectives so they know what they will be expected to learn

### Commentary

#### Examination results

81. On entry to the school, pupils' attainment in mathematics is above average. Results in the Year 9 tests in 2004, and in the previous two years, were above the national average and above the average for similar schools. GCSE results in 2004 were well above the national average, with almost three quarters of the year group gaining grades A\* to C. Nearly one in five of the pupils obtained the highest grades A\* or A, almost double the national proportion.

#### Standards and achievement

82. At the end of Years 9 and 11 achievement is good in all areas of mathematics, with major strengths in handling data and in space and shape. Pupils of different abilities do well and overall standards are well above average. In response to the supportive teaching, pupils behave very well, concentrate and work hard. By the end of Year 9 pupils confidently recognise and use the general equation for a straight line including those lines with negative gradients. They recognise from equations whether or not lines are parallel. By the end of Year 11 pupils can use cumulative frequency curves to calculate the median and interquartile range.

#### Teaching and learning

83. The quality of teaching is good overall and teachers have good subject knowledge. Most lessons build on pupils' prior knowledge and are presented in ways that ensure good learning. In a well-prepared lesson, for example, pupils learnt to apply their knowledge of congruent triangles to solve circle theorem problems. Other strengths of teaching include using a number of different types of activity during the same lesson so that pupils' attention is continuously engaged. Good questioning by the teacher encourages the pupils to consider the appropriateness of an answer. Pupils are taught the skills of the subject well. They do not always get told the lesson objectives. This means that, at the end of the lesson, they are unable to assess how much they have learned. The use of Interactive whiteboards is serving to interest the pupils and enhance learning. Where they are not functioning or where teachers are not yet confident in their use, learning is hindered. The routine setting of homework successfully reinforces learning. Every pupil has a target for improvement in the subject. Their work is marked conscientiously but pupils receive too little information about what they need to do to progress from one grade or level to the next.

#### Leadership and management

84. The department is successfully focusing its attention on raising standards and there has been substantial increase in GCSE results. The leadership and management of the department are good. An audit of strengths and weaknesses has been carried out and developments have been prioritised. A committed and mutually supportive team of teachers work purposefully to improve the opportunities offered to the pupils. Classrooms provide an attractive environment for learning and are located in accommodation that encourages

collaboration between teachers and the sharing of ideas. However the use of ICT to support and enhance the subject is under-developed. Progress since the last inspection has been good.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

85. Pupils have very good mathematical skills, which they apply and consolidate in other subjects. Teachers of all subjects have been made aware of the importance of emphasising mathematics. An audit has taken place identifying where, and when numeracy topics are covered. For instance the audit identifies that in the second half of the spring term Year 7 will be performing a statistical survey in geography. Priority areas, such as mental arithmetic, are identified from the audit and workshops for staff are held to ensure that there is a consistency in the way in which topics are taught. During the inspection a very good example was seen in history where Year 11 pupils devised 'living' graphs to plot the impact of world events and used Venn diagrams to show how events affecting the Jews in Nazi Germany were inter-related. All subjects generally make a very good contribution to the development and understanding of mathematics.

## SCIENCE

Provision in science is very good.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Well above average	Well above average
Achievement	Very Good	Very Good
Teaching and learning	Very Good	Very Good

  

Leadership	Very Good
Management	Very Good
Progress since last inspection	Very Good

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The teaching is very good, resulting in very good achievement and well above average standards
- Pupils' very good behaviour and attitudes provide an atmosphere conducive for work and learning
- Good use is made of pupils' performance records to set targets and improve results
- Computers and other ICT equipment are not used enough

### Commentary

#### Examination results

86. Results in science tests at the end of Year 9 in 2004, were above the national average but below those of English and mathematics. In comparison with similar schools, results were above average. Over time results have ranged from well above to above average. Over the last five years GCSE results at the end of Year 11, have been well above the national average and in line with those for both English and mathematics and the average for the school. Results in GCSE examinations have shown an upward trend, well above the national one.

#### Standards and achievement

87. Overall pupils' attainment on entry to the school is above average. At the end of Year 9 students achieve very well and standards seen were well above average suggesting an improvement on the 2004 results. Standards at the end of Year 11 continue to be well above average and pupils maintain their overall very good progress. Pupils are interested in their work, they are prepared to question and test their answers, as was observed in a very good Year 11 lesson where pupils were revising and discussing the difference between exothermic and endothermic reactions. Pupils have very good literacy skills and are confident when expressing themselves both in their written and oral work. Investigative work for coursework is of a very good standard and develops pupils' scientific skills. In lessons pupil behaviour is very good and they are able to concentrate and learn.

#### Teaching and learning

88. Pupils' progress is supported by the knowledge, enthusiasm and skills of very supportive and friendly staff, with very high expectations for pupils to succeed. Staff through their teaching and relationships enable the pupils to develop a self-confidence which enhances pupils' development and ability to understand challenging scientific concepts. In a Year 7 lesson investigating the characteristics of acids, numerous exercises, including a game based on dominoes, caused excitement, greatly enhancing pupils' interest and learning. A Year 11 lesson focusing on revision for module tests, used a newly installed interactive white board very effectively to increase pupils' understanding of the relative structure of diamond and graphite molecules. Achievement is further enhanced by a system of assessment where pupils' are set challenging but realistic targets, and where individual progress from Year 7 to 11 is carefully monitored.



## Leadership and management

89. Since the last inspection there has been improvement in results at both key stages, which is well above the national trend and is largely due to very good leadership and management within the department. Teachers in science provide very good role models for the girls both as achievers and scientists. Staff development and sharing of ideas is a common feature of all departmental meetings and further develops the strength of the team. Lesson observation occurs on a regular basis and is a useful tool to further improve teaching skills. Resources are managed very well with the help of able and effective technical staff. Pupils ICT skills are not sufficiently developed partly due to a lack of computing resources, but overall, improvement since the last inspection has been very good.

### INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION

Information and communication technology is taught in separate ICT lessons to all pupils in Years 7 to 9 and is supplemented by work in other subjects. In Years 10 and 11, pupils are able to opt for a vocational double GCSE award in ICT. Pupils in these years who do not opt to do this course are expected to do enough ICT in other subjects to cover the national requirements.

Overall provision in information and communication technology is good.

The provision is better in the separate ICT lessons than in the other subjects.

	Year 9 ICT lessons and other subjects	Year 11 Vocational GCSE in ICT	Year 11 ICT in other subjects
Standards	Above average	Well above Average	Average
Achievement	Very Good	Very good	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Very Good	Very Good	Satisfactory

  

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since the last inspection	Good

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Specialist ICT teachers plan their lessons very well with a variety of activities which maintain pupils' interest, so that they achieve highly
- Good discussions, questioning and answering allow pupils to develop a good understanding of ICT concepts
- Specialist ICT teachers' knowledge of examination board requirements ensure that pupils are very well prepared for the GCSE examinations
- Although ICT is included in the schemes of work of most other subjects, access is limited in some subject areas and the schemes of work are not fully implemented
- The ICT experience of pupils in Years 10 and 11 who do not take the vocational GCSE ICT award, is not recorded and monitored

### Commentary

#### Examination results

90. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2004 show pupils' attainment to be above average. In 2004 the results for the vocational double award GCSE at the end of Year 11 were well above the national average. This was the first cohort to complete this course.

#### Standards and Achievement

91. The standards seen in ICT lessons in Years 7 to 9 were above average and pupils achieve very well. They use software packages with confidence. They manipulate images and import them into a desktop publishing package, showing very good initiative and independence when adding extensive

writing. Pupils have a good understanding of database concepts. They use spreadsheets competently and are able to use these to make predictions. Written work is well organised.

92. Standards seen in the vocational double GCSE course in Years 10 and 11 were well above average. Pupils are confident in the use of advanced features of spreadsheets. They recognize the effects of ICT in society, appreciating the impact of Internet use, producing relevant presentations. Pupils plan their coursework very well and the design of relational database structures is very thorough. Pupils taking examination ICT achieve very well.

### **Teaching and learning**

93. Teaching and learning in Years 7 to 11 in lessons taken by specialist ICT teachers are very good. The teachers have a very good knowledge of the subject and the coursework requirements of the examination board. This is conveyed effectively to the pupils. Lessons are very well planned using excellent resources. Data projectors are well used in a variety of ways to support teaching and learning. In the best lessons the pace is fast; all pupils are fully focused and involved because teachers effectively use a variety of activities in the same lesson, including group and paired work. Teachers circulate, supporting pupils, enabling all to make very good progress. Questioning and answering techniques are well developed and, encouraged by the teachers, pupil response is very clear and positive. Pupils are encouraged to assess their own and each other's work, setting their own targets for improvement. However there is an inconsistency in marking and assessment; some is superficial and not in line with the assessment policy within the whole school.

### **Leadership and Management**

94. The specialist ICT teaching team works well together. The ICT development plan links well to the school development plan. Leadership and management of the specialist ICT are good and improvement since the last inspection also good. The accuracy of assessment of ICT in Years 7 to 9 has improved and a double award vocational GCSE ICT course has been successfully introduced into Years 10 and 11. This course is taken by almost half of the current Year 11 pupils and almost a third of Year 10. The remaining pupils in these years receive their ICT entitlement through other subjects.

### **ICT across the curriculum**

95. The school has four ICT suites, two attached to specific departments. There are fourteen interactive white boards, mainly in use by English, mathematics and science. All teachers have had ICT training and the school has purchased appropriate software. Not all of this has been installed. ICT is well used in music for composition. In design and technology ICT supports computer-aided design and computer-aided manufacture. The well equipped multimedia suite in the modern foreign language department is used by all pupils to develop their linguistic skills. In English, although the interactive whiteboard is used for teaching, there is no evidence of the use of ICT in pupils' work and no planned delivery. A new computer suite has recently been installed for the use of pupils with special educational needs.
96. Standards in ICT in Years 7 to 9 are above average, mainly due to the good teaching and learning in ICT lessons which is supported well by work in some other subjects. In Years 10 and 11 standards of ICT for those pupils who do not take the GCSE course are satisfactory although the pupils' experience of ICT is not formally monitored or recorded.
97. The Leadership and management of ICT across the curriculum is satisfactory. The use of ICT in other subject areas has not yet been thoroughly mapped and so the school only has a sketchy view of what is happening across the curriculum. There is no effective assessment of ICT delivery within other subjects. This is particularly important for those pupils who are not following a separate ICT course in Years 10 and 11 to ensure they fully meet the statutory requirement for ICT provision. Since the last inspection there has been a heavy investment in computers and the network infrastructure and although progress overall is satisfactory, there are still some weaknesses in the accessibility of computers in some subjects.

## HUMANITIES

### Geography

Provision in geography is good.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Well above average	Above average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Very good	Good

  

Leadership	Good
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since last inspection	Good

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils learn successfully because they enjoy varied activities and use high quality resources in clearly structured lessons
- Teachers use their subject knowledge and enthusiasm to make pupils' discussions thought provoking and analytical
- Pupils do not acquire the full range of investigative skills because fieldwork provision is unbalanced and insufficient
- GCSE examination results are improving and the number opting for geography at this level is increasing
- Achievement is restricted when the final part of lessons is rushed through or the reasons for pupils' inattentiveness are not effectively dealt with

#### Commentary

##### Examination results

98. Results of teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 were well above average in 2003 and 2004. GCSE results at the end of Year 11 in 2004 were in line with the national average although the proportion of A\* and A grades is markedly below that attained by girls nationally.

##### Standards and achievement

99. Pupils' attainment when they join the school is above average. By the end of Year 9 standards are well above average. Pupils make good progress interpreting maps and photographs, and building up locational knowledge and understanding. They recognise complex patterns of physical and human features, and understand the links between them.
100. Geography is an optional course in Years 10 and 11. Year 11 pupils competently carry out data collection and analysis to test hypotheses. In a Year 11 lesson, the use of a television forecast, satellite photographs, practical demonstration and a weather chart, helped all pupils to understand depressions. Generally pupils achieve well in lessons and standards are above average.
101. In all years, pupils' numeracy skills enable them to use statistics and graphs well. Pupils are articulate when giving explanations and voicing ideas. Overall, pupils' behaviour is very good and they all, including those with special educational needs, achieve well over time.

##### Teaching and learning

102. Teaching was good in Years 10 and 11 and very good in Years 7 to 9. A Year 8 lesson was typical of very effective teaching. Objectives were shared with pupils so they knew what they would be learning and why. The teacher read an account of an earthquake so that pupils were able to imagine themselves experiencing it. Groups then enjoyed role-play to explore prediction, preparation and protection. Good quality information sheets helped

pupils play their distinct parts in discussion, evaluate their relative importance, and write a summary. Some pupils had time to communicate their findings to the class very well.

103. In nearly all lessons, teachers used a variety of different teaching approaches and pupils achieved well. Achievement was weaker when pupils shared resources or found work too difficult, resulting in sporadic progress. Hurried endings were a feature of a few lessons so that pupils could not review or report back on their work. Fieldwork is not provided for Years 8 and 9, limiting pupils' achievement in working with primary data. Otherwise fieldwork is based entirely on human geography and takes no account of physical topics or associated practical work. Pupils use ICT very competently to research and present homework topics and GCSE coursework.
104. Assessment is good and includes pupils' self-evaluation. They have target levels and grades to aim for. Pupils are not always clear what they need to do to improve their work to reach these targets.

### **Leadership and management**

105. The teachers are new or relatively new to the school. Good leadership has established a strong team approach and pupils now have some stability after a period of staffing changes. The teachers are good role models. They display enthusiasm for the subject and there is a commitment to improving standards. Systems for monitoring and developing the department's work are not rigorous enough. This includes the analysis of assessment data and trends in examination results, the subject's contribution to citizenship and pupils' personal development, and the department's development plan. Since the last inspection, the quality of teaching has improved, as have standards at the end of Year 9 and progress has been good.

### **History**

Provision in history is very good.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Well above average	Well above average
Achievement	Very good	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good	Very good
Leadership	Very good	
Management	Very good	
Progress since previous inspection	Very good	

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards in Year 9 and Year 11 are well above average
- Pupils' very good knowledge and skills enable them to analyse and interpret historical data very effectively
- Teaching and learning are very good and reflect the teachers' strong subject knowledge and enthusiasm
- Very good leadership and management promotes high expectations and standards
- The use of ICT, though satisfactory, is limited

### **Commentary**

#### **Examination results**

106. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 are well above average. GCSE results are also well above average. This represents consistently very good achievement from an average starting point in Year 7.

## **Standards and achievement**

107. Pupils achieve very well. In all year groups they have impressive knowledge and use this to develop very good skills. They become particularly good at analysing and combining information from a variety of sources. They then use the analysis to develop a reasoned argument in support of a particular interpretation, often defending their views well in a robust discussion. In an excellent Year 8 lesson pupils worked very well together to use their knowledge of the impact of the French Revolution to analyse Napoleon Bonaparte's motives. They drew sensible conclusions about whether he was acting entirely in his own interests, those of the French people, or a mixture of the two. The debate which followed was lively, challenging and well-informed. Pupils use their literacy skills very well in written and oral work, with occasional weaknesses in the spelling of everyday words, though seldom in the use of more technical vocabulary. Pupils are enthusiastic, work very well in pairs and small groups and are generally confident enough to risk making mistakes and learn from them.

## **Teaching and learning**

108. The quality of teaching is very good in years 7 to 11. Teachers are enthusiastic about history and are keen to see that their pupils share this enthusiasm. They use their excellent subject knowledge very effectively to extend their pupils' knowledge and understanding. The activities planned help pupils to apply what they know to questions of interpretation and analysis of information. These activities draw heavily on pupils' literacy skills but teachers also use good methods drawn from mathematics. For example Venn diagrams are used to show clearly the relationships between different aspects of the same topic and 'living' graphs are used to illustrate the pace of change. In most lessons the level of challenge was systematically raised throughout the lesson so that the pupils ended by achieving more than they had expected. In a very good Year 11 lesson, the questioning and probing enabled students to move from a fairly simple analysis of the impact of Roosevelt's New Deal, to an understanding of the complex inter-relationship of social, economic and political factors to explain why some groups in the United States benefited much more than others. Teachers assess and mark pupils' work very well and give clear guidance on how pupils can improve.

## **Leadership and management**

109. The leadership and management are very good. Teachers work very well together and are encouraged to share ideas and approaches. They are keen to ensure that history continues to be a popular choice for pupils at GCSE and a very successful subject. The schemes of work have been re-written to provide very good support and guidance for staff and the development plan has clearly identified areas for further work. They indicate very clearly the way in which history contributes strongly to the development of literacy, ICT and citizenship. The department is aware that at present opportunities for the use of ICT are limited, but plans to expand this as access to ICT improves. The improvement since the last inspection has been very good.

## **Religious education**

Religious education was not inspected but was part of a separate inspection.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

Design and technology consists of food, textiles, graphics and resistant materials, taught throughout Years 7 to 11. GCSE courses in all four areas are offered. The department is also responsible for child development.

Provision in design and technology is very good.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Above average	Well above average

Achievement	Very good	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good	Very good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Progress since last inspection	Very good

## **Main strengths**

- Results at GCSE are very good
- Teachers have very high expectations which keep standards high
- Assessment is rigorous and good use is made of the data collected for target setting and tracking pupils' progress
- Pupils use computer aided design and manufacture in Years 10 and 11 to effectively support their designing and making skills

## **Commentary**

### **Examination results**

110. Pupils' previous experience of design and technology when they start in Year 7 is very limited. Teacher assessment shows that results at the end of Year 9 are average, but the work seen showed that pupils had made very rapid progress and they were above, rather than at, the national average. The rapid progress continues throughout Years 10 and 11 and results at GCSE are well above national standards. All pupils taking textiles gained grades A\* to C as did those taking the child development GCSE. Results in the other design and technology subjects were also well above the national average. Overall the proportion of A\* and A grades were well above the national average and pupils taking design and technology subjects did better than in their other subjects.

### **Standards and achievement**

111. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 keep well ordered folders containing their work for all areas of the subject and for each year. These clearly show their growing competence, increasing level of recording skills and greater depth of knowledge of the subject. Standards are above average and achievement very good. All pupils in Years 7 to 9 study all four areas of design and technology and their varied experiences hold them in good stead for GCSE options. By the end of Year 11 pupils' work is of a well above average standard, showing skills in a wide range of materials and tools and with an emphasis on innovative design and quality finish. Their design folders show their mature attitude to designing and making and demonstrate their knowledge of industrial practices and computer aid design and manufacture. ICT is used well to enhance their work and show their graphic skills to best effect. Pupil achievement is very good.

### **Teaching and learning**

112. The quality of teaching and learning is very good overall with examples of excellent teaching. Teachers are very knowledgeable. They share their expertise with the pupils and give very good individual support. A very good range of learning activities motivates and extends their learning. Teachers have high expectations and learning objectives are communicated well. Positive relationships create a very good working environment where all, including those with special educational needs, learn well. Links with industry and varied extra-curricular activities and clubs enrich the experience.

### **Leadership and management**

113. Leadership and management of the department are very good. There is a clear determination for the department to continue to succeed and strive for even better examination results. Assessment is very good and although it is not the school model, it is very efficient. The marking of pupils' work is consistent across the department and the clear records which are kept enable teachers, parents and pupils to see at a glance how well the pupil is achieving. Teachers make constructive comments on how pupils can improve. They and the technicians work well as part of a successful team. The well planned, new accommodation provides excellent facilities for teaching and learning. Improvement since the last inspection is very good and all points identified in the previous report have been resolved.

## VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

The school organises visual and performing arts into a creative arts faculty consisting of art and design, drama and music. Art and design and music were inspected, drama was sampled.

### Drama

114. In the GCSE examinations in 2004 results were significantly below the national average and below the results of the last two years. In the lessons observed, standards were higher, reflecting the strategies adopted by the leadership of the subject, supported by that of the school, to improve the pupils' attainment. In this respect, the involvement of an Advanced Skills Teacher is a good initiative, as is the careful monitoring of pupils' work.
115. The quality of teaching and learning seen was good. A notable feature of the lessons observed was the successful manner in which pupils co-operated in groups. Their levels of sustained concentration were high. In practical work pupils displayed a good awareness of space and a secure grasp of a range of dramatic techniques. Written work showed a good understanding of technical terminology. In the GCSE lesson observed, pupils received confidence boosting praise for their efforts, but insufficient guidance on how to meet the criteria for gaining good GCSE grades. Pupils' experience of drama is enriched by a good range of extra-curricular opportunities. Facilities for drama are excellent.

### Art and design

Provision in art and design is satisfactory.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Average	Well above average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Good
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Good

  

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since the last inspection	Satisfactory

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The 2004 results in GCSE examinations were well above average and pupils on the GCSE course make good progress
- Pupils make good progress during Year 7 but less progress in Years 8 and 9
- Pupils drawing skills are good, but the quality and use of sketchbooks is limited in some classes
- The department evaluates its own strengths and weaknesses well and this has led to a clear plan to improve areas of relative weakness

### Commentary

#### Examination results

116. Teacher assessments of pupils' attainment at the end of Year 9 in 2004 were overall below the national average and significantly lower than attainment in other subjects. The numbers taking a GCSE examination was small but results for the same year were well above average. The proportion of higher, A\* and A grades was below the national average although overall, girls achieved similar standards in art as in their other examinations.
117. Current standards do not reflect the below average teacher assessments of Year 9 pupils in 2004. In Year 7 pupils make good progress and respond very well to the opportunities provided for them. Their sketchbooks show experiments with colour mixing and good quality drawing from observation. Drawing has been a key area for improvement in the recent past and in all years there is evidence of high standards. The quality of research, pupils' ability to



compare and contrast the work of artists and their analysis of different contexts, is not of the same quality and depth. In Years 8 and 9 pupils do not progress at the same rapid rate so overall, achievement is satisfactory and standards seen, average. In part this is because the short 50 minute lessons restrict the depth and opportunities for sustained concentration and reflection. For some pupils the work could be more demanding and expectations higher. Currently the use of sketchbooks is limited and standards in some groups are lower than might be expected.

118. In Years 10 and 11 pupils are given guidance on examination marking criteria and this provides an effective structure on which to build a body of work that balances different skills. Pupils also use their literacy skills well. From their various starting points all pupils achieve well and some very well. Teachers have identified weaknesses in pupils' ability to develop their ideas independently and this is now a key area for maintaining the well above average standards.

### Teaching and learning

119. The teaching observed was satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 but good in Years 10 and 11. Teachers have good specialist skills. The short lessons, identified as a weakness in the previous inspection, limit the scope and frustrate a wider range of teaching styles. They also hamper learning, notably in the opportunities for pupils to think for themselves and work independently. Sometimes teachers provide too much information rather than using questioning, to prompt and encourage pupils to search for and express their own explanations and interpretations. Teachers make good use of assessment criteria to shape their planning and feedback in Years 10 and 11. In younger classes the longer-term objectives, and how different activities contribute to pupils' overall National Curriculum level, are not so clearly communicated. This restricts the depth of pupils' self-evaluations and their understanding of how to improve. Homework tasks are not sufficiently extended to meet some of the deficiencies of lesson length and the lack of access to computers.

### Leadership and management

120. The small team of art teachers is well led and managed although there has been some instability due to recent staffing changes. The department has effectively assessed its strengths and weaknesses and the process of self-evaluation has been thoughtful and rigorous. As a result, there are improvements in Year 7 and in Year 11. There is a strong desire, as well as a secure plan of action, to continue to raise standards and overcome the obstacles of curriculum time and lack of access to computers. Standards in GCSE examinations have improved significantly since the last inspection and there is an increase in the numbers opting for the subject. Progress since the last inspection has been satisfactory.

### Music

The overall provision in music is very good.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Above average	Above average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good
Leadership	Very good	
Management	Very good	
Progress since last inspection	Good	

### Main strengths

- Achievement is good due to pupils' very positive attitude to the subject and good quality teaching
- The use of information communication technology music programs is contributing positively to pupils' creative development
- The provision for extra curricular activities is very good, supporting the achievement of musically talented pupils
- The GCSE results have been consistently above the national average

## **Commentary**

### **Examination results**

121. The teachers' assessments of 14-year-old pupils indicate that standards are above the national average. The results for the 2004 GCSE examination were well above average. The number of pupils achieving the higher grades of A\* and A was also above average. Although these results are not as high as last year, previous results have been consistently high.

### **Standards and achievement**

122. Although pupils' previous experience has been varied, with limited opportunities to create their own music they join the school in Year 7 with standards that are average overall. However with the benefit of good teaching and pupils' very positive attitude to the subject progress is rapid, reaching standards in Year 9 that are above average. Pupils have developed good rhythmic skills and this is contributing positively to their creative and practical development. This was evident in a film music topic. Here, with the aid of a music technology program, pupils successfully added a musical backing to a film clip with varied rhythmic patterns to create an appropriate atmosphere. Their well established knowledge of the use of primary chords and the elements of music is also adding to the overall quality of their creative work.
123. The good achievement continues in Years 10 and 11 and pupils are above the standard expected. Practical skills are well developed. The majority of pupils in the Year 11 group are confident and competent instrumentalists or singers and use their practical skills well to support their compositions. They have a good understanding of how to use composing techniques to develop their work. An example of this was in their minimalistic compositions. Here pupils used the ostinato technique, a repeated musical phrase, as a basis to their composition, effectively using polyphonic patterns to develop their composition.

### **Teaching and learning**

124. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good, some with very good features. A particular strength of the teaching is the starter activities. These activities quickly capture and engage pupils' interest leading well into the main focus of the lesson. Teachers manage pupils well enabling them to use their good specialist practical skills to demonstrate different styles of music with a minimum of interruption. The outcome of this is that pupils start the practical tasks with a clear understanding contributing positively to their learning. Teachers move around the class well advising pupils on how to develop their work, adding to the pace of their learning. An additional strength of the teaching is the planning with a variety of activities to maintain pupils' interest, successfully building on their existing knowledge with established plenary sessions to ascertain pupils' achievement and understanding. Assessment procedures are well established. Pupils know the levels they are achieving and how they can improve. Teaching is less effective when the planning does not take into account the occasions when lessons are of a shorter duration. The outcome of this was that pupils did not have sufficient time to practise and improve their skills thus failing to do as well as they could.

### **Leadership and management**

125. The leadership and the management of the subject are very good. The leadership shows a clear vision and is ambitious about the future developments of the subject and the need to continue to improve standards. The leadership's positive role model for colleagues and pupils is adding significantly to the ethos and the very high profile that the subject has in the school.
126. The provision for extra curricular activities is very good and of a very high quality. The wide and varied range of ensembles is supporting pupils' practical development and providing challenging activities for musically talented pupils. The use of information communication

technology to support pupils learning is clearly identified in the planning and is contributing significantly to pupils composing development. The open house policy adopted by the department for pupils to ‘drop in’ for practise is positively supporting practical skills. Examination results have been sustained at a well above average level. The overall improvement since the previous inspection has been good. Standards have been raised and the number of pupils choosing the subject as a GCSE option has increased.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

The quality of provision in physical education is very good.

	Year 9	Year 11 GCSE	Year 11 Core
Standards	Above average	Well above average	Above average
Achievement	Very good	Very good	Good
Teaching and learning	Very good	Very good	Good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Progress since last inspection	Good

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE results are well above the national average
- Very good teaching and learning in many lessons results in very good progress overall
- Very good relationships between pupils and with members of staff make a significant contribution to the very good learning in most lessons
- A good range of activities after school, support and enrich work done in lessons
- Time for pupils in Year 11 core PE is insufficient to ensure full coverage of the curriculum and to ensure appropriate progression through Years 10 and 11
- The on site accommodation limits the range of activities available to the pupils

### Commentary

#### Examination results

127. In 2004 teacher’ assessments at the end of Year 9 were well above the national average. Pupils who took GCSE PE at the end of Year 11 attained results which were well above the national average. Pupils achieved as well in physical education as they did in their other subjects.

#### Standards and achievement

128. Standards in Years 7 to 9 are above average. Given the average attainment of pupils on entry to the school, this represents good progress. Pupils in a Year 9 netball lesson had a good range of passing skills which they were able to use accurately and effectively in a competitive game situation. The ability of pupils to observe and analyse performance was very good and in many lessons had a significant impact on improving performance skills. GCSE pupils achieve standards that are well above the national average. They had a good understanding of many aspects of the course including physiology and anatomy, and factors affecting performance in sport. Pupils were able to apply some of their knowledge of the circulatory system to developing competence in life saving skills. Standards attained by pupils in Years 10 and 11 who are not on the GCSE course are above the national average overall, although the range of activities they can take part in is limited by the PE accommodation.

#### Teaching and learning

129. The quality of teaching and learning overall was very good. One excellent lesson was seen. All teaching was good or better. Teachers' secure knowledge of the subject is regularly conveyed to pupils through perceptive observation of performance, appropriate intervention and good teacher directed question and answer sessions. Thorough planning, incorporating varied teaching strategies and an appropriate sequence of activities involving both individual and collaborative learning is also a feature of these lessons. In an excellent Year 7 dance lesson pupils developed a range of choreographical devices and incorporated them into a dance sequence. The class teacher gave pupils responsibility for their own learning within a well structured framework and intervened very effectively throughout the lesson to provide the pupils with ideas for improving their dance. They were also encouraged to analyse the performance of others in the group to generate further ideas. Relationships between staff and pupils are very good and pupils respond with enthusiasm to all lessons in all years.
130. Assessment of performance by teachers in the best lessons is used to enhance teaching although targets are only rarely linked to national curriculum levels. In some lessons individual pupils are not set clear targets for improvement and there were limited strategies for extending the higher attaining pupils. The recording of assessment is developing and is involving pupils in setting their own targets for improvement. Pupils on the GCSE course are aware of their target grades and most have a good understanding of what is required for improvement although marking of theory work is not providing enough guidance. Opportunities to use information technology on the GCSE course are being utilised by some pupils but is still developing and is not sufficiently utilised by most pupils. There are a very good range of activities after school for pupils of all abilities to support and enrich work done in lessons. The school competes successfully with other schools in a range of sports and many pupils achieve representative honours.

### **Leadership and management**

131. Leadership and management of the department are very good. The department works very effectively to overcome the difficulties imposed by the deficiencies in the PE facilities and ensure pupils have a very good experience of PE. There is a clear vision of how the department should develop with an emphasis on improving standards in all areas. There is good communication and co-operation between members of the department and all are very good role models for the pupils. The day-to-day organisation of the department is very good. The time available to the non examination pupils in Years 10 and 11 and limited on site facilities for sport, restricts the breadth of activities. As a result non examination pupils reach above average rather than well above average standards. The problem of insufficient time in Year 11 has still not been addressed since the last inspection but since standards and teaching in the department are now well above average overall and the department is very well led, improvement since the last inspection is good.

### **BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES**

- The school runs two vocational courses. The double award GCSE vocational ICT and travel and tourism. The ICT vocational course was inspected and is reported in the ICT subject section.
132. One lesson in travel and tourism was observed. Pupils were learning how to conduct themselves at interviews and the teacher was ably supported by an adviser from the Connexions service. The lesson was very effective and provided pupils with some good opportunities to practice these vital skills. Many of the class had special educational needs, they concentrated well, were well motivated and enjoyed their learning. Achievement was high.

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

Personal, social and health education and citizenship are taught through tutor time, assemblies, religious education, and other subjects. Assemblies and tutor periods were observed. The overall provision for personal, social and health education is very good.

**Citizenship**

Provision in citizenship is good.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Above average	Above average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Not inspected

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teaching and learning are good and as a result pupils are achieving well
- Citizenship makes a very good contribution to pupils' personal development
- Leadership and management are good and as a result, citizenship is well-established.
- The youth award course, religious education, history and science all make a good contribution to citizenship
- The contribution of some subjects needs further identification and development
- Active citizenship in the wider community is not as well-developed in the wider community as it is in school

## **Commentary**

### **Standards and achievement**

133. Standards are above expectations and pupils achieve well. For example, in a good Year 7 lesson on crime and society, pupils were listening well to each other and responding well to good questioning and to the various scenarios presented to them. This helped them to formulate their own ideas effectively and understand better some of the moral and social issues involved in the topic.

### **Teaching and learning**

134. Overall the quality of teaching and learning are good. A good range of activities and topics engage pupils' interest and the emphasis on discussion and working in pairs and small groups helps to develop very good social skills and respect for the opinions of others. In a very good lesson in Year 8 on the rights of the individual, the good use of paired and whole class discussion in a case study, helped pupils to develop their ideas in a very sensible and mature manner. A Year 11 lesson on finance involved the use of role play which helped to bring a rather dry topic to life. Pupils' work is assessed regularly and this helps them to know how well they are doing. Most teachers have good subject knowledge, but a few are less confident with the material.

### **Leadership and management**

135. The leadership and management of citizenship are good. The implementation of the national requirements has been carefully and successfully managed to ensure that citizenship is recognised by staff and pupils as an important part of the curriculum. Citizenship is taught partly in tutor time and partly through other subjects. The school did a thorough audit to identify what was already being done and a good balance has been struck between involving all teaching staff in tutor time and the need for more specialist input in some areas. The schemes of work provide good information and support for teachers, most of whom are not specialists. The contribution of some subjects is very clear for example in science, history, religious education and the Youth Award course, but the contribution of some other subjects is not made as explicit. The girls are encouraged to take part in activities in school which promote active citizenship, such as elections to the school council and charity fund raising. The school is aware that it needs to develop active citizenship in the wider community. Citizenship was not taught at the time of the last inspection and therefore a judgement of improvement is not appropriate.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
<b>The overall effectiveness of the school</b>	<b>2</b>
How inclusive the school is	2
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	2
Value for money provided by the school	2
<b>Overall standards achieved</b>	<b>2</b>
Pupils' achievement	2
<b>Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities</b>	<b>1</b>
Attendance	2
Attitudes	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
<b>The quality of education provided by the school</b>	<b>2</b>
The quality of teaching	2
How well pupils learn	2
The quality of assessment	3
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	3
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	3
Accommodation and resources	4
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	1
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	2
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	2
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	2
The quality of the school's links with the community	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	2
<b>The leadership and management of the school</b>	<b>2</b>
The governance of the school	2
The leadership of the headteacher	1
The leadership of other key staff	2
The effectiveness of management	3

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