

INSPECTION REPORT

**MOUNT ST JOSEPH:
BUSINESS AND ENTERPRISE COLLEGE**

Bolton

LEA area: Bolton

Unique reference number: 105263

Headteacher: Miss P Walker

Lead inspector: John Godwood

Dates of inspection: 10 – 13 May 2004

Inspection number: 258709

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: Mixed
Number on roll: 911

School address: Greenland Road
Farnworth
Bolton
Lancashire
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Telephone number: 01204 391800
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Appropriate authority: Governing body
Name of chair of governors: Mr R Palframan

Date of previous inspection: January 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Mount St Joseph is a Catholic comprehensive school with specialist status as a business and enterprise college. It received the DfES schools' achievement award in 2001 and 2003. Other awards include Sportsmark, Investors in People and the UK Aerospace Challenge. The college is the lead partner in a successful bid to establish a technology innovation centre on its site that will provide events and courses in leading-edge technology for pupils throughout Bolton. The centre is not yet open but has been built and is in the process of being equipped. The majority of students come from Catholic homes. Most students live in south-east Bolton, though some travel from other parts of Bolton and surrounding districts. The college is popular and is over-subscribed. Its socio-economic context is disadvantaged, especially in terms of the number of adults with higher education. Attainment on entry is below average. Most students have a white British heritage, though one in ten come from minority ethnic groups, including a small number who speak English as an additional language and a small number of asylum seekers. Almost one in three students have special educational needs, including 47 with a Statement of Special Educational Needs. This is well above average. Of those with more significant needs, most have emotional and behavioural difficulties or learning needs, while 14 students have physical disabilities and a very small number have communication difficulties.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
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27666	John Dockrell	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
11508	Chris Griffin	Team inspector	English
18542	Gerald Griffin	Team inspector	Design and technology, information and communication technology
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Mount St Joseph is a good school. It has a very good ethos, in which all students are very well supported and are encouraged to be enterprising and have concern for others. Students achieve well as a result of good teaching and very good care. Leadership and management are good: the headteacher gives very good leadership and staff are committed to the college's Catholic principles and to fulfilling each student's potential. Students' progress is monitored carefully but the work of departments is not monitored systematically enough. The college gives very good value for money.

The college's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Students achieve well in many subjects and standards are rising.
- The headteacher and governors have established an ethos of care and fostering of talent, which is shared by all staff.
- Students are well taught and their progress is monitored carefully.
- Students do not have enough opportunities in lessons to think for themselves or discuss ideas.
- The college is welcoming and very supportive to all students, including those with special needs.
- The college promotes enterprise and provides students with many additional opportunities.
- Departmental planning does not have a strong basis in self-evaluation and the work of departments is not monitored systematically enough by senior staff.
- Achievement in citizenship lessons is limited by a lack of teaching time.

Improvement since the last inspection is good. Standards have risen faster than the national trend. Teaching has improved. There has been a good response to many of the issues in the last report, particularly in provision for ICT, though the library book stock remains inadequate. Improvements in students' literacy and punctuality are satisfactory. The college has gained business and enterprise status and provided students with new opportunities to take part in projects.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Performance in GCSE/GNVQ examinations at the end of Year 11, compared with:	all schools			similar schools
	2001	2002	2003	2003
	n/a	D	E	C

*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.*

Achievement is good in Years 7 to 9 and in Years 10 and 11. Year 9 test results have gone up and down, but the overall trend is upwards. Results were average in 2002 but well below average in 2003. Current standards in Year 9 are below average overall; they are below average in English and average in mathematics and science. However, students' achievement in relation to their attainment on entry is good in most subjects; very good in physical education; satisfactory in science, modern languages and citizenship. GCSE results have also improved significantly. The above table shows students' capped points (their best eight subjects), which were well below average in 2003, but their total GCSE points score was average in 2002 and 2003. Current standards in Year 11 are broadly average. Achievement is good in most subjects; very good in physical education, business and music; satisfactory in science and geography. Students with special educational needs achieve well as a result of very good support. Students from minority ethnic backgrounds achieve as well as others.

Students' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are good. Attitudes are good: students enjoy school and co-operate well, though

many are dependent on their teachers. They are very well managed and, as a result, their behaviour is very good and they are considerate to each other. Attendance is good and punctuality is satisfactory.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education is good. Teaching is good. Teachers know their subjects very well and plan lessons and homework carefully to ensure that students make good progress and are well prepared for examinations. In some lessons, students do not have enough opportunities to explain their own thinking or to solve problems independently. Teachers have a strong commitment to individual students and give additional support to ensure that all have an equal chance to succeed. Assessment is used well to track students' progress, but in some subjects marking does not provide enough constructive guidance. Teaching is good in most subjects. It is very good in physical education and business. It is satisfactory in science, modern languages, geography and citizenship.

The curriculum is good, with very good provision for students with special educational needs. Extra-curricular opportunities are very good and include exciting projects in local industry. The business and enterprise plan has good potential to increase enterprise in learning and provide opportunities in the local area. ICT is used well in some subjects, but overall students have too few opportunities to practise their computer skills in other subjects. Achievement in citizenship is limited because not enough time is allocated to lessons. Care is very good. Students' progress, attendance and behaviour are monitored carefully and this contributes significantly to their achievement. The college keeps in close touch with parents and has very good links with the community and other schools.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher provides very good leadership in establishing a clear direction of a Catholic school rooted in its community that encourages innovation and enterprise. The leadership of other key staff is good. Governors make a very good contribution in supporting and monitoring the college's developments. The high level of staff commitment and care results in a very good ethos in which students feel safe and encouraged to achieve. All statutory requirements are met. Management is good and financial management is very good. Most departments are well managed but the quality of departmental self-evaluation and planning is not strong. Senior staff evaluate performance and have taken action to improve several subjects, but the work of all departments is not monitored sufficiently systematically.

PARENTS' AND STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE COLLEGE

Most parents are very pleased. They particularly like the college's atmosphere, in which children are well supported and encouraged to enjoy learning. They are very pleased that the college contacts them to report problems or successes and that their concerns are taken seriously. Most students are very happy in the college. They appreciate their good relationships with teachers and the extra support they are given. They find the discipline fair and that any bullying is dealt with very well.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- give students more opportunities in lessons to think for themselves and discuss their ideas, particularly in science;
- monitor the work of departments more systematically and improve the quality of departmental self-evaluation and planning;
- provide sufficient teaching time for citizenship to cover the National Curriculum in depth.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Achievement is good in Years 7 to 9 and in Years 10 and 11. Standards are below average at the end of Year 9 and average at the end of Year 11.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results in Year 9 tests and GCSE examinations have risen faster than the national trend.
- The college has a strong focus on inclusion and ensures that all groups of students achieve well, including students with special educational needs.
- The difference between boys' and girls' performance is less than that found nationally.
- Achievement is supported by good teaching, a very supportive ethos and careful monitoring of progress.
- Students' abilities to give oral explanations and pursue independent enquiry are underdeveloped.

Commentary

1. The trend of improvement in Year 9 results since the last inspection is above the national trend, though results have gone up and down each year. In 2002, results were average and were the best ever in all core subjects, but in 2003 they declined again significantly and were well below average. Results are generally highest in mathematics and lowest in English. Girls do slightly better than boys, but in recent years the gap has been smaller than that found nationally.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	29.0 (32.6)	33.4 (33.3)
mathematics	33.3 (34.3)	35.4 (34.7)
science	31.1 (33.0)	33.6 (33.3)

There were 194 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

2. GCSE results have also improved at a rate faster than the national trend. For the last two years, results have been average for students' total points score, but below average for five or more A*-C grades and for students' best eight subjects. The total points score is higher than other measures because some students take vocational courses which count as two GCSE passes. The 2003 results were in line with similar schools overall: students' best eight subjects were lower, but the proportion gaining five or more A*-C grades and the total points score were higher than in similar schools. The progress that students made from Year 9 to GCSE was also better than in similar schools. Girls made more progress than boys, though the gap between girls' results and boys' results is less than that found nationally.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	40 (42)	52 (50)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	83 (88)	91 (91)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	93 (95)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	28.8 (31.0)	34.7 (34.8)

There were 168 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

- For current students, standards in Year 9 are below average overall. The college has responded very well to the disappointing results in 2003, particularly in assessing students' progress more closely and reviewing some teaching. As a result, standards have improved. These students' attainment on entry was also below average, particularly in their literacy skills, and their achievement is good. In most subjects, students achieve well because they are well taught, they have positive attitudes and their progress and behaviour are carefully monitored. Achievement is very good in physical education, but satisfactory in science and modern languages. These variations are related to variations in the quality of teaching. Achievement is only satisfactory in citizenship because too little time is allocated to lessons in citizenship, even though students have many opportunities outside the classroom to become good citizens.
- Students also achieve well in Years 10 and 11 and standards in Year 11 are average. Since the last inspection, the college has improved GCSE results by carefully monitoring students' progress and offering additional support to students in danger of underachieving. This support has resulted in boys' results being closer to girls' than is the case nationally. Students achieve well in most subjects. They achieve very well in physical education and business because the teaching of these subjects is consistently very good. Achievement is also very good in music because of the individual attention available to a small GCSE group. In science, however, while higher-attaining students achieve well, achievement is satisfactory overall because the teaching of lower-attaining students does not provide enough challenge in developing enquiry skills. In geography also, students have too little experience of enquiry work and as a result their achievement is satisfactory.
- When students join the college, their literacy is well below average and lower than their numeracy. Across all subjects, the support given to improve students' literacy is satisfactory, particularly in respect of their reading and writing. This contributes to their achievement, though in some subjects extended writing needs further development. However, students tend not to speak at length or give reasoned explanations. Lessons do not provide enough opportunities for speaking and listening, and hence students are not challenged sufficiently to think for themselves. Students' skills in working independently on research, problem solving or independent enquiry are also not well developed. In subjects where these skills are encouraged, such as business, students respond well and improve their achievement.
- Students with special educational needs make good progress in reaching their individual targets, and in improving their reading and spelling ages. Their progress is carefully monitored and as a result of good support from teachers and learning support assistants they achieve well in all subjects. Many achieve very well in GCSE courses. Students with physical disabilities achieve very well in physical education, where they are fully integrated in lessons. Gifted and talented students are provided with a good range of additional opportunities and achieve well. Students from minority ethnic backgrounds are very well integrated and those with English as an additional language are well supported, so that they achieve as well other students.

Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Students' attitudes are good and their behaviour is very good overall. Attendance is good and punctuality is satisfactory. Students' moral development is very good; their spiritual and social development is good; their appreciation of their own and other cultures is sound.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- In most lessons, students' behaviour is very good and contributes positively to their learning.
- There are clear expectations of how students should behave and very good systems to help staff maintain these.
- The college has clear values that contribute strongly to students' personal development.
- Most students have a positive approach to their education and participate well in what the college has to offer.
- Attendance is above average and truancy is minimal.
- Compared with other aspects of the college, cultural provision is not fully developed.

Commentary

7. Students behave very well in most lessons and this supports their learning. The college has clear expectations which students understand and with which they usually comply. The behaviour policy encourages positive behaviour and provides teachers with practical guidance on dealing with situations. Misdemeanours are recorded on the class computer and the records are used effectively by pastoral staff to monitor how each student is responding in lessons and take appropriate action. Detentions and other sanctions are used in clearly-defined circumstances and a wide range of rewards, from certificates to end-of-term visits, encourage students to behave well. Parents are kept informed and involved very well; students appreciate that their parents hear about their successes and know that misdemeanours will have consequences at home. Behaviour management is supported by a strong college ethos that emphasises care for others. In a minority of lessons behaviour is less good; this is often because teaching is not as good and there is hesitancy in applying the college's discipline code. In a few lessons, disruptive behaviour from a small number of students affects the learning of the whole class.
8. Around the college site, students behave sensibly, with due regard for others. The corridors get very crowded at lesson changeover times, but this is handled with good humour by students and potentially vulnerable individuals such as wheelchair users are helped to make headway. Students are confident that the college is effective in handling the few incidents of bullying that occur. The number of exclusions is below average and those that do occur are for appropriate reasons and are not imposed lightly.

Ethnic background of students**Exclusions in the last school year**

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of students on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	812	35	3
White – Irish	16	0	0
White – any other White background	5	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	11	1	0
Mixed – White and Black African	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	5	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	10	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	23	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	2	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	1	0	0
Black or Black British – African	8	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	1	0	0
Any other ethnic group	9	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	10	0	0

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

9. Students join the college with a range of attitudes and aspirations and a significant proportion come from backgrounds in which education is not highly valued and horizons are limited. The college has a strong determination to help students see that all things are possible, to raise their aspirations and develop their ambition to succeed. Most students respond positively and value the high expectations and support. They enjoy school and participation in extra-curricular activities is high. However, despite the college's efforts, many students lack confidence and are unsure speakers and listeners, which can result in difficulties working together and having to adapt to others' views. Some appear very taciturn. The college takes every opportunity to foster confidence and ambition, often involving partners from the wider community. A team of students, for example, entered and won a UK aerospace competition to build a working rocket, winning a trip to the Space Olympics in Russia. The parable of the talents is used in the college not just as a text but as a call to action.

10. The college's statement of what it is trying to achieve – "a community of learners, believers, friends" – emphasises the importance of relationships and human values. The Christian belief that all are equal in the sight of God is the basis of its very strong ethos. This is seen in the way that staff from the headteacher downwards set an example, with many prepared to give their own time to support students. Students and parents appreciate this. The college helps students to develop a set of values on which to base their own social and moral judgements. This strong pastoral support depends a great deal on the committed heads of year and form tutors. Prayers during the school day provide moments of calm for reflection, and there are some spiritual moments in lessons – Hail Mary said in Spanish, for example, at the start of a lesson. A particularly effective opportunity for spiritual development occurred on a Year 10 trip to the battlefields of France. Students stood in the trench from which in 1916 the Accrington Pals battalion emerged and heard how these men from near Bolton were massacred a few yards in front of them – a powerful experience for the young people involved. College assemblies are effective in reinforcing the college's values and are often led by the students themselves.

Assemblies are occasionally very moving, such as a Year 11 leavers' mass, but on other occasions they fail to engage students, with few joining in the hymn singing.

11. The provision to enable students to appreciate their own and other cultures and to live in a diverse society is satisfactory. Art and music lessons include the study of cultural themes and in geography students study the cultures of countries such as Japan or Brazil. However, opportunities in religious education to explore other beliefs and cultures are more limited than in many schools. The college provides a number of opportunities for students to develop their social skills. Prefects help with supervision and represent the college on formal occasions. Other students run the college tuck shop. The citizenship programme involves many students in activities that develop enterprise and concern for others. Year 11 students themselves initiated and run a programme to support younger students' reading in the library.
12. Attendance is above average and there is little truancy. Holidays taken during term time, although discouraged by the college, are a significant factor in the attendance figures. Punctuality is satisfactory. At the start of the day and after breaks some students are slow to get to their lesson, though at other times they move sensibly between lessons. The college has an effective computer system for monitoring attendance in each lesson and the resulting data is used well to identify problems.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	6.7	School data	0.9
National data	7.2	National data	1.1

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

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education is good. Teaching is good. There is a good curriculum, with very good opportunities for enrichment and very good provision for students with special educational needs. The quality of care and support is very good. There is a good partnership with parents and very good links with the community and other schools.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are good. Assessment is good overall, though some marking does not give students enough guidance on how to improve their work.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have very good expertise in their subjects and prepare students well for examinations.
- Teachers care for individuals and ensure that all have the chance to succeed.
- Students are very well managed and respond well in most lessons.
- Students do not have enough opportunities to discuss ideas and express their own understanding.
- Students' skills in solving problems independently are not developed sufficiently.
- Homework is used well in almost all subjects.
- The quality of marking varies and some does not provide enough constructive guidance.

Commentary

13. More than seven out of every ten lessons seen were good or better and three out of ten were very good or excellent. Teaching and learning are good in most subjects. They are very good in

physical education and business and satisfactory in science, modern languages, geography and citizenship.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 112 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
2 (1.8%)	32 (28.6%)	47 (42.0%)	29 (25.9%)	2 (1.8%)	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.

14. Teachers have very good knowledge of their subjects and use this to plan well-structured lessons that enable students to make good progress. Teachers give clear explanations and because of their own expertise and care they prepare students well for examinations. Homework is set regularly in almost all subjects and is used well to enable students to apply the skills they learn in lessons. Art is an exception, where a lack of homework limits students' opportunities to do research.
15. In almost all lessons, students are very well managed; they respond well to teachers' care and high expectations and in most cases behave very well. There are very good relationships between teachers and students in many subjects and, as a result, students focus well on their work and try hard. In physical education, students' attitudes are particularly good because of the high level of challenge and care. In science, there is a minority of weaker lessons where students' behaviour deteriorates because they are not sufficiently engaged in challenging activities.
16. Teachers show a high level of concern for individual students and ensure that all have an equal chance to succeed. Students with special educational needs are taught well, both in mainstream classes and when they are withdrawn. Their individual needs are known well and teachers generally use appropriate methods to ensure that they achieve well. In most subjects their learning benefits from good support from learning support assistants. Students who speak English as an additional language are known well as individuals and are taught well; they are supported in class by other students and, in some lessons, by a specialist teacher.
17. In some lessons, such as the best lessons in English, students have good opportunities to speak and listen to others, but in general these opportunities are too limited. In mathematics and science, for example, teachers do not ask enough open-ended questions that stimulate students to think out and explain their own ideas. In history, teachers are skilled in asking questions that test understanding, but some lessons lack opportunities for students to discuss their interpretation of events. Many students are naturally reticent and their ability to argue and explain is not fully developed. Citizenship lessons, however, do offer opportunities for debate.
18. Students' abilities to work independently and carry out their own enquiries are not developed as well as they should be. This is partly a consequence of the high priority that teachers place on discipline and careful management. In science and geography, for example, opportunities are missed for students to plan their own investigations. As a result, students' achievement in these subjects is limited because they do not fully develop their ability to think and work independently. In ICT and mathematics, students learn well as a result of carefully planned lessons and their good response. However, some ICT lessons are directed too closely by the teacher and in mathematics there is a greater emphasis on learning techniques than solving problems. In business, learning is very good because students work well independently, thinking for themselves and doing their own research.
19. Two excellent lessons were observed – in history and physical education. In these lessons, students were very highly motivated and fully engaged as a result of the teachers' very high expectations, very good management skills and lively, interactive approach. Two lessons were unsatisfactory – in geography and science. In these lessons, students did not learn enough

because the tasks lacked challenge and, in the science lesson, their behaviour was not managed effectively.

20. The quality of marking varies across subjects. In most subjects, work is marked regularly and supportively but often does not give students specific guidance on how they can improve their work. Marking is helpful in mathematics and music; it is weak in art and geography. In Years 10 and 11, teachers provide effective guidance about students' course objectives and what they need to do to achieve them; this practice is very good in business and ICT and is also effective in most other subjects.
21. Assessment is used well to raise standards, particularly in Years 10 and 11. The policy is very clear and its implementation is led well by the assessment co-ordinator. Students are given appropriate targets in each subject, based mainly on their attainment in national tests at age 11 and 14. They are assessed each term in each subject and the results are checked by senior staff to identify students who are likely to underachieve. The thoroughness of assessment is good in most subjects, especially in business and ICT in Years 10 and 11 and in English, mathematics and science in all years. Its quality is more variable in some other subjects in Years 7 to 9 where practice is still developing and teachers are less secure in judging levels of attainment. Heads of year and the head of lower school play an important role in following up potential weaknesses. Parents are notified at an early stage; booster classes, mentoring by members of staff and close monitoring are used to reverse any decline in progress. Classes in each subject are arranged according to students' attainment in that subject. This is done carefully and is regularly reviewed; students are moved up or down to help ensure they are challenged appropriately in class.

The curriculum

The college has a good curriculum, with a growing emphasis on business and enterprise. It is enriched by a very good range of extra-curricular activities. Staffing and resources are good; the accommodation is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum offers a broad range of courses that meet the needs of different groups of students.
- The focus on enterprise gives the curriculum relevance and has been given new impetus by the college's status as a business and enterprise college.
- There are many opportunities for students to extend their studies outside lessons.
- Students do not have enough opportunities to apply and develop their ICT skills in other subjects.
- Standards are affected by a low time allocation for science in Years 7 and 8 and for citizenship.

Commentary

22. The curriculum in Years 7 to 9 includes all the National Curriculum subjects and religious education as well as a second modern language for higher-attaining students in Years 8 and 9. Drama is available in Year 9 as an after-school course. The curriculum is appropriately broad and balanced, except that the time available for lessons in citizenship and personal, social and health education is too low, resulting in a superficial coverage of some topics. In science, students' practical skills are underdeveloped partly because the time allocation in Years 7 and 8 is below average. There is a good range of courses in Years 10 and 11, including several vocational subjects. This meets the needs of students well. The curriculum is regularly reviewed and there are plans to add further courses this September, specifically GCSE dance and drama, more work-related courses and a life skills course for students with special educational needs. All students have ICT lessons and from next year will gain a qualification in ICT. Computers are used well to support students' learning in mathematics, modern

languages, design and technology and business, but overall the curriculum does not provide enough opportunities for students to practise their computer skills.

23. The college strives to raise students' aspirations through its emphasis on enterprise and making the most of one's talents. It has very strong links with commerce and industry, which provide additional resources, work experience and mentors for individual students. The enterprise ethos has been strengthened since the school became a specialist business and enterprise college in September 2003. All subjects have identified business links or opportunities for enterprise that are designed to add relevance and encourage students to discover and develop their own abilities. In many subjects these are at an early stage but in design and technology, for example, a very successful textiles Accomplice project has led to the commercial development of students' designs. An art trip for Year 9 students to St Ives included a focus on making a living from art.
24. The number of students who continue in education after the age of 16 is below average. This is exacerbated by the fact that there is no post-16 education in south Bolton. The college encourages students to pursue further education through many links with colleges and school sixth forms. In an effort to provide more opportunities for students in the local area, the college is planning in conjunction with other local schools to provide post-16 courses on its own site from 2005.
25. The provision for students with special educational needs is very good; it is very well planned to meet the individual needs of students with a wide range of difficulties, including learning difficulties and physical disabilities. Students have specialist individual teaching and good support from learning support assistants in lessons. Their learning is enhanced by an exceptionally wide range of sporting, cultural and social activities. Students with English as an additional language have good support in lessons; their progress is carefully tracked and they have the same curricular options as all other students. Gifted and talented students are carefully identified and benefit from a wide range of additional activities, including summer schools and early entry for GCSE examinations such as drama and statistics. There is good provision in many subjects, including masterclasses in mathematics and residential visits in art.
26. There is a very good range of extra-curricular activities and students' participation is high. Religious education provides an exceptional range, including weekly masses, hospital visits, charity events and visiting speakers. Citizenship activities make a significant contribution to students' ability to undertake responsible action. The Young Enterprise company has successfully produced Christmas and Valentine cards. Physical education provides a very wide range of sports to suit all students. Physically disabled students, for example, enjoy clay pigeon shooting and archery. The music and drama departments are collaborating to put on a production of Annie. The college provides many residential opportunities for students to develop their study and social skills. For example, there is an annual visit to Barcelona to practise Spanish and a technology residential where students meet other young designers.
27. There is a good match between teachers' qualifications and experience and the subjects they teach. The college is well staffed with learning support assistants for students with special educational needs and with technicians in science, design and technology and ICT. The curriculum is well resourced: textbooks and equipment are sufficient and suitable; the number of computers is above average and a recently-purchased set of laptops will enable computers to be used in any room.
28. The accommodation is on two sites and is satisfactory overall. The main building is very well maintained, with many attractive displays that celebrate achievement and learning. Disabled students have access to all parts of the college and there are plans to provide additional facilities for disabled students in anticipation of more joining the college next year. The accommodation for special educational needs is adequate, but the base is not sited centrally and this restricts students from dropping in for additional support. There are insufficient science

laboratories and specialist rooms for teaching religious education. Vocational courses and some humanities lessons are taught at the St Gabriel's Convent, which is four miles away. This accommodation is satisfactory, though the number of computers is limited and students have to share. The distance between the two sites results in teaching time being lost through travelling.

Care, guidance and support

Care, welfare, health and safety are very good. The college provides students with very good support, advice and guidance and involves them well in its work and development.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good induction procedures ensure a smooth transfer from primary school.
- Most students have good and trusting relationships with their teachers.
- Students have access to well-informed advice and guidance when they need it.
- Health and safety and child protection procedures are very effective.

Commentary

29. The college is a safe working environment. There are very good health and safety procedures, overseen appropriately by senior staff and governors. Sympathetic first aid is available in the pastoral office. Child protection procedures fulfil requirements and are very effective in practice; staff are regularly briefed and appropriate records are kept. The college works well with agencies such as social services to ensure that students get additional help when they need it. It is sensitive to the needs of particular groups, such as asylum seekers, physically disabled students or looked after children.
30. Most teachers and other staff know students well. The college's values emphasise the worth of each individual and staff are effective at putting this into practice. There is good rapport and mutual respect between students and staff. In particular, students feel that teachers know them well and will listen to their problems. Parents believe that staff treat students fairly and encourage them to become mature and independent. Induction arrangements for Year 7 students are very good. Contacts start in primary schools as early as Year 4 and are developed over subsequent years. In particular, students' progress is enhanced by projects that are started in primary school and completed at Mount St Joseph.
31. Students' progress is regularly assessed and action is taken if a student is underperforming. Selected students in Years 9, 10 and 11, for example, have a personal mentor to support their study and personal organisation. Parents are also involved and the close support has been effective in raising examination results. The monitoring of behaviour, attendance and academic performance is aided by good computer records which enable senior managers, teachers and pastoral staff to share information and responsibility for helping students. Students feel that their teachers willingly give extra time to help with their work. The college uses external support, such as counselling, Connexions, local businesses and parish support networks. The college's belief that with faith anything is possible underlies the support that staff provide for students.
32. Students with particular needs are given time in a less stressful environment or a modified curriculum, such as a work-related programme. A group of students with special educational needs, for example, attend an accredited course on broadcasting at a local radio station, where they learn the skills of editing and programme scheduling. They are very well supported and grow in self-confidence. Lessons in personal, social and health education cover a range of relevant issues and support the college's ethos, but their effectiveness is limited by the low time allocation. The school council is well run by the students themselves and its deliberations are valued by the college management team. In addition, the college seeks students' views through questionnaires.

33. Students receive good guidance on opportunities for careers or further education. There is good liaison with the Connexions service and good opportunities for students to evaluate their own abilities and aspirations. In Year 10, students have work experience and in Year 11, visitors from colleges and employers inform them about their future options. In addition to giving practical information, the college uses every opportunity to raise students' aspirations for their future lives, through assemblies, teachers' own example and additional opportunities.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

There are good links with parents and very good partnerships with the local community and other schools and colleges.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The college has a strong commitment to its local community and uses its links to encourage students to think beyond school boundaries.
- The college's business and enterprise status has good potential to widen the support the college provides both for its own students and for other schools and the wider community.
- Parents are very supportive of the college and appreciate what it is achieving for their young people.
- There are particularly good links with local parishes to support students and their parents.

Commentary

34. Parents are generally very positive about the college. They feel well informed and are comfortable approaching the college with a question or concern. They believe that the college seeks their views and takes them into account. This support from parents is all the more creditable given that many parents live a considerable distance away.
35. Information to parents is satisfactory. Students' homework diaries are regularly checked and include a space for comments, but are not often used for home-school communication. There are two interim reports and a full annual report each year. These give useful information on progress and attitudes, though in many subjects teachers' guidance for improvement is not sufficiently specific. A computer-aided report is being introduced, which has the potential to provide more detailed comments, but in the first trial the wording is rather stilted. The prospectus and governors' annual reports are both useful documents. The college is active in involving parents by letting them know about their young person's successes or problems. Attendance by parents at meetings to discuss progress is good and has been much improved through the college's efforts. There is an active parents' association which organises social and fundraising events. The college informs parents about its work; for example, the Year 10 trip to the battlefields of France was followed by a presentation and video of the trip so that parents could share the experience.
36. The college has very good links with other Bolton schools, and the business and enterprise plan includes exciting joint projects which are at an early stage of implementation. The college has a strong commitment to its local community. It is the lead school in a successful bid to establish a technology innovation centre on its site. This will give children from all Bolton schools taster experiences using leading-edge technology and provide specialist courses for those with an aptitude for technological innovation. At the time of the inspection the building was complete, though not yet fully equipped. It is a large, impressive building and already contains a very sophisticated prototyping machine that is one of only a handful in the country. This is a potentially world-beating project, and its success is a tribute to the entrepreneurial skills and commitment of key staff from the college. The project development manager and the college's business office are shared with the family of schools for projects such as 14-19 education and the writing of future bids. The college has good links with sixth form colleges to ease students' transition to further education.

37. There are very good links with the local community. The college is a base for evening courses run by Bolton College and has provided computer courses for parents. Links with local businesses are well established and will be strengthened and extended through the business and enterprise plan. In one project, Year 10 students designed a chef's uniform, which they developed with the help of business partners and then presented to a panel for judging. This provided relevance and an insight into the design process. Strong ties with an aerospace company have led to curricular development, training, summer schools and projects. Businesses are supportive in providing work experience placements. The college's most important link with the wider local community is with the local parishes. Students and their families are supported by priests, nuns and lay parishioners to help them make the most of their education and other opportunities. Parish priests support the spiritual life of the college by taking services.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are good overall. The headteacher provides very good leadership and leadership of other key staff is good. Governance is very good. Management is good and financial management is very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students' achievement and personal development are strongly supported by the college's ethos of care and enterprise, which is shared by all staff and led very well by the headteacher.
- Governors provide very good support, expertise and links with the local community.
- The college is very inclusive, providing very well for students with a wide range of needs.
- The business and enterprise plan is well managed and is beginning to have an impact across the college.
- Departmental plans do not provide a clear strategy for raising standards.
- The work of departments is not monitored sufficiently systematically by senior staff.
- The induction of new staff is very good.
- Financial management is very good, with very good use made of all available resources.

Commentary

38. The headteacher leads the college very well in its mission as a Catholic business and enterprise college to recognise the unique value of each student and to nurture their particular talents. These values, together with a spirit of care for others and service to the community, are shared widely throughout the college and motivate many teachers and support staff to give a high level of commitment to the college and to individual students.
39. Equality of opportunity is integral to the college's mission and the college is very successful in enabling students from a wide range of backgrounds and with a wide range of special needs to feel welcomed and achieve well. This is partly due to the very good care given to individual students by the pastoral team, teachers and learning support assistants. As a result of the college's very good support for moral development, students are also very considerate to each other. The progress and personal development of individual students are monitored carefully and, as a result, students from minority groups achieve as well as other students. However, the college does not routinely analyse its results to check the progress of groups of students from different ethnic backgrounds. The college goes to great lengths to meet the needs of individual students, including modifications to the buildings for physically disabled students and modifications to the curriculum for vulnerable students. Since the last inspection, an effective mentoring programme has improved boys' attainment, which is now closer to girls' than is the case nationally.
40. Governors carry out their duties very well. They are fully committed to the college's aims and development. They bring very considerable expertise and provide very good links with the local

community, including the Church, industry and parents. They know the college well, including its strengths and weaknesses, and provide the senior management team with challenge as well as very strong support. Some individual governors visit the college very regularly and are closely involved in the college's strategic planning. The full governing body, however, has limited involvement in initiating the development plan, though it is consulted and plays a full part in formulating policies.

41. The college development plan provides a strong basis for the college's drive to give students opportunities for enterprise, to raise aspirations and improve standards. Each objective is linked to one of the college's long-term aims and actions are carefully planned, with specific targets, responsibilities and financial implications. The plan incorporates the business and enterprise college plan. This is well structured and has good management arrangements to implement and evaluate progress. The business and enterprise plan builds well on existing links with business and is beginning to develop an enterprise ethos across the college, though many of the developments within subjects are still at an early stage.
42. The headteacher is well supported by the senior management team, particularly in the pastoral care given to individual students and the monitoring of students' progress and behaviour. The leadership and management of most departments are good. Staff commitment is very strong, but in many departments self-evaluation procedures do not provide a clear picture of strengths and weaknesses in students' performance or the quality of teaching as a basis for planning improvements. As a result, departmental planning is satisfactory: priorities are linked to whole college priorities but many plans do not outline a clear strategy for raising students' attainment through improvements in the quality of teaching.
43. The senior management team is reflective and many aspects of the college's work are evaluated with a view to making improvements. However, the procedures do not provide a systematic evaluation of all aspects of the college's work. There is a sound analysis of examination results, which is reported to governors and staff, though this does not include strengths and weaknesses in the progress made by different groups of students. Each department is overseen by one member of the senior management team. These links provide informal support for heads of department but do not provide systematic guidance for departments or regular management reports on the quality of teaching and departmental work. As a result, there is a lack of consistency in the quality of departmental planning, teaching and assessment. Recent senior management reviews of three departments have been effective in improving the quality of teaching and raising standards.
44. Newly-qualified teachers receive very good induction and support. The college is also an effective provider of initial teacher training and this has a positive impact on recruitment. The college has three advanced skills teachers, who give valuable support and guidance to individual teachers. Staff training and performance management are well managed and linked to the development needs of the whole college. As a result of the college's business and enterprise status, many staff have been on work placements in local firms.

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	3,049,324
Total expenditure	3,136,684
Expenditure per pupil	3,361

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	46,316
Balance carried forward to the next	-41,044

45. Financial management is very good. A budget deficit that existed at the time of the last inspection has been eliminated, with the deficit shown in the above table removed during the 2003/4 financial year. Budget planning is closely linked to the priorities in the college development plan. The business manager is very active in bidding for additional funds and in

making the best use of available funds; as a result the college has made considerable improvements to its facilities.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 and 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement is good as a result of good teaching and the department's inclusive approach.
- Despite a fall in 2003, there has been an upward trend in examination results.
- The department is well led and an effective, consistent approach to learning is emerging.
- Target setting supports learning but marking does not always give enough specific guidance.
- The best teaching is very good and needs to be extended across the department.
- Despite a strong emphasis on writing in Year 7, students in Years 7 to 9 require a sharper focus on improving their punctuation of complex sentences.
- There is not enough use of structured speaking and listening to support reading and writing.

Commentary

46. Results have fluctuated at the end of Years 9 and 11, though the trend since the last inspection is upwards. Year 9 results in 2002 were average and were a very good achievement. In 2003, however, they were well below average and not as high as expected. GCSE English results also vary. In 2002, they were average and significantly higher than expected but in 2003, they were below average and lower than expected. In English literature, the proportion of students who gained A*-C grades was below average in 2002 and 2003, but significantly more students gained A*-G grades than is the case in most schools.
47. The department has responded rigorously to the disappointing results of 2003 and standards have risen. For current students, standards in Year 9 are below average but their achievement is good in relation to their attainment on entry. Reading standards are average: most students identify and analyse key features of a text well. However, writing standards are below average because of shortcomings in the writing of middle attainers. Their writing tends to be too short; inaccurate punctuation undermines their control of complex sentences; paragraphing is not consistent. Higher attainers write accurately and use precise vocabulary effectively. Standards in Year 11 are broadly average: more than half of students are at grade C or higher. Higher attainers are very assured, insightful and accurate in their writing. Middle attainers write with clarity and basic accuracy. They make good progress in writing well-expressed extended assignments, but lack the analytical skills of higher attainers. A small proportion do not reach grade C because of inaccuracy and a lack of detail. Lower attainers have a sound knowledge of texts but frequent inaccuracies lower their standards. Standards of speaking and listening are average throughout the college. Students with special educational needs make good progress because they receive very specific help in structuring their ideas. They respond well to good encouragement from their teachers and learning support assistants. The values of the department ensure that students are treated equally and have every opportunity to succeed.
48. Teaching and learning are good overall. In Year 7, rigorous use of target levels and the explicit teaching of reading and writing skills result in good progress. However, in Years 7 to 9 as a whole, there is not a sharp enough focus on accurate punctuation to help students write more complex sentences. During Years 10 and 11, teachers and students collaborate well. This motivates students to work hard and helps them to raise their standards through implementing

teachers' very good guidance on coursework and examinations. The best lessons are very well planned. Strict timing of tasks and activities ensures that students complete work of good quality. In these lessons, speaking and listening are used effectively to prepare written work: an approach that needs to be extended into more lessons. In less effective lessons, there is not enough challenge and students do not achieve as well as they could because of flaws in time management. They do not make the most of chances to work independently. A consistent and effective departmental style is emerging at the start of lessons, with a clear focus on intended outcomes, tasks and key vocabulary. Opportunities to review learning are sometimes missed both during and at the end of lessons. Behaviour is good. Homework is used well to help students apply and develop their skills. The monitoring of students' progress towards their target levels is good. Marking in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory. There are good examples of comments explicitly reinforcing strengths and suggesting how to improve. However, too many comments do not specify what has been done well and how to improve. The subject makes a satisfactory contribution to students' ICT and numeracy skills.

49. Leadership is good and the head of department is a very good role model. Management is good, with self-evaluation and monitoring used effectively. Better use of data to set targets is emerging following the disappointing results of 2003. Improvement since the last inspection has been good: far more students now successfully enter GCSE literature; development planning has been introduced; there are very effective contacts with primary schools; and resources have improved.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

50. Provision for literacy across the curriculum is satisfactory. Standards are below average in Years 7 to 9 and average in Years 10 and 11. Since the last inspection, literacy has been a major focus of staff training and the college has made satisfactory progress. However there is currently no co-ordinator to lead and monitor developments and departments are developing their own practices.
51. Students use technical vocabulary well. Teachers emphasise the importance of key terms and reinforce their use. In a Year 7 science lesson, for example, students with special educational needs made good progress in acquiring specific terms because the activities were imaginative and motivating. In Years 10 and 11, writing is well supported by techniques such as writing frames. However, extended writing in Years 7 to 9 is an area for development. There are not enough opportunities for structured oral work throughout the college. As a consequence, students tend not to provide extended, reasoned answers. Teachers ask too many questions of a closed nature, so limiting the range of answers. Overall, students do not use talk enough to clarify their understanding and support their learning. Where there are good opportunities for oral work, as in business for example, the impact on standards and understanding is significant.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers show a strong commitment to students of all levels of attainment.
- Almost all students leave college with a GCSE in a foreign language.
- The regular use of computers is increasing students' motivation to learn a language.
- Lessons do not always include enough opportunities for speaking.
- The department needs a more strategic approach to implementing new developments.

Commentary

52. GCSE results in French in 2003 were below average, though students did as well as in their other subjects. Girls' results were better than boys', but by less than is the case nationally. Students made satisfactory progress over the two year course. GCSE Spanish results in 2003 were well below average and both boys and girls did less well than in their other subjects. Their progress in relation to their attainment at the end of Year 9 was unsatisfactory. Some of the difference between results in the two languages was due to lower ability sets being entered for Spanish. All students follow a course in a modern language and, as a result, the proportion of students leaving with a GCSE in a foreign language is well above average.
53. For current students, standards in Year 9 in both French and Spanish are below average overall and students' achievement in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory. Higher-attaining students in French have a good understanding of grammar and good recall of earlier work. In Spanish, higher-attaining students in Year 8 are well ahead, already covering language from the Year 9 course. Students in the two top sets take up a second language in Year 8; they have sufficient language skills to make up for the late start. Lower-attaining students find writing in a foreign language difficult because they have low self-esteem and weak literacy skills, but supportive teaching enables them to make satisfactory progress. By Year 11, standards in both French and Spanish are below average overall. Higher-attaining students reach a good standard in written coursework and are well prepared for the speaking examination. Year 11 standards in Spanish have improved since the 2003 results following a review of teaching. Achievement in both languages is good in Years 10 and 11 because good examination guidance has helped all students, including those with special educational needs, to reach the level required for a GCSE grade.
54. Teaching and learning in both languages are satisfactory and sometimes good or very good. Lessons are characterised by good relationships between teachers and students. Teachers take every opportunity to offer support and encouragement in order to improve students' self-confidence. Sometimes this leads teachers to limit the challenge they give students, by using too much English or by answering their own questions. Teaching enables higher-attaining students to reach good levels of accuracy, but they are not always challenged sufficiently to improve the style of their writing. In lessons where the teaching is done largely in French or Spanish, students become accustomed to the pace and intonation of the language and develop good listening and speaking skills. The best lessons include a variety of activities to practise all the language skills, and students enjoy learning through games and songs. All classes use computers regularly, and for many students this increases their motivation to learn a language. Teachers' use of a computerised interactive whiteboard improves the quality of presentation and the pace of teaching. In some weaker lessons, there is too great a focus on content and too much new vocabulary, and students do not do enough speaking and listening to consolidate the new work. Teachers regularly assess students' work, and students know the National Curriculum level they have reached and what they need to do to improve. Homework is set regularly and books are marked with both encouraging comments and areas for improvement.
55. The department is well managed, with clear systems and documentation. Leadership, however, is satisfactory. Teaching is monitored and targets agreed, but the progress that teachers make towards their targets is not followed up. There is a sound development plan, but there is no programme to ensure that agreed priorities are implemented. There has been good progress since the last inspection because the number of students entered for GCSE has increased significantly. Teachers work well as a team, with a shared commitment to all students and the capacity to raise standards in both languages.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers work well as a team and are fully committed to the success of all students.
- Very good relationships create a secure atmosphere for learning.
- The department is led well, with a strong focus on raising standards.
- Students with special educational needs are well supported by good links with specialist staff.
- Teachers do not ask enough open-ended questions to develop students' speaking skills.
- Students are not always challenged by tasks that are well matched to their ability.

Commentary

56. Year 9 test results show a firm upward trend since the last inspection, despite some year-by-year fluctuation. Results were average in 2002 but below average in 2003. Mathematics results are the strongest of the core subjects. GCSE results were average in 2002 and 2003. Boys did slightly better than girls. Students' performed better in mathematics than in their other subjects.
57. For current students, standards are average in Year 9 and in Year 11. Students achieve well in relation to their attainment on entry to the college. By Year 9, for example, higher-attaining students successfully use trigonometry to solve problems, and lower-attaining students calculate angles in simple shapes. Students learn to carry out mathematical investigations. As a result of good teaching, they make good, steady progress, though many of the problems they solve are straightforward and do not stimulate them to think widely and ask new questions. By Year 11, higher-attaining students have a good understanding of how to use graphs to solve different types of equation. Lower-attainers make steady progress with simple algebra and apply it to problems involving speed, distance and time. The presentation of students' written work is always good and often very good. Students with special educational needs achieve as well as others.
58. Teaching and learning are good and almost half the lessons seen were very good. Teachers plan carefully and lessons are well structured. Where teaching is very good, lessons proceed at a rapid pace and include tasks that challenge students of all abilities. In some weaker lessons, the work is pitched too much at the middle and not all students are fully challenged. Many lessons end effectively with a session in which students review what they have learned, though activities to give a brisk start to the lesson are not always so well managed. Students are well prepared for examinations and homework supports learning well. ICT is used well by teachers to illustrate their explanations and by students to explore mathematical ideas. Students' literacy is given satisfactory support and their writing skills are developed well when they do investigations. However, teachers do not ask enough open-ended questions to encourage students to explain their own understanding. Teachers use assessment well to identify students who are doing particularly well or who are underachieving and give their time freely to provide additional support outside lessons. Books are well marked with useful advice for improvement, though students are not routinely informed of the attainment level they are reaching. Teachers know their students well and work well with specialist staff to support students with special educational needs. Students' attitudes are very good and make a positive contribution to their learning.
59. Leadership and management are good, with a clear direction outlined in the development plan, though planning is not sufficiently detailed in outlining how priorities will be achieved. The work scheme provides a good basis for lesson planning, but does not include enough varied tasks for students of all abilities in each class. Staff are strongly committed to the success of all students and care is taken to choose the most appropriate courses. Careful management has ensured that the strength of the teaching team has been maintained. Teaching is monitored thoroughly, though not enough use is made of the outcomes in sharing best practice. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good. Teaching has improved; standards have risen faster than the national trend and the difference between the performance of boys and girls has been reduced.

Mathematics across the curriculum

60. Support for mathematics across the curriculum is satisfactory. Students' mathematical skills are sufficient for their needs in other subjects, though in many subjects opportunities for developing mathematical skills are not specifically planned in the scheme of work. In science, business and design and technology, for example, students gain practice in using formulae, graphs and measurement and teachers ensure that their skills are adequate for the subject. In history and physical education, however, opportunities for numeracy are identified in lesson planning. Some work has been done on creating a policy to co-ordinate numeracy, but the impact of this has so far been limited. Further work is needed before all opportunities to develop mathematical skills are used effectively.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Most higher-attaining students achieve well, but some lower-attaining students could achieve more.
- Scientific enquiry skills are not developed sufficiently in Years 7 to 9.
- Teachers explain key concepts well and emphasise new technical vocabulary.
- Teachers' questions often do not encourage students to speculate or explain their thinking.
- Students' progress towards their targets is monitored regularly.
- Analysis of performance is not used sufficiently to guide strategic planning for improvement.
- ICT is used effectively for simulations and research, but data-loggers are not used enough.

Commentary

61. Year 9 results in 2003 were well below average and well below similar schools. In 2002, however, results were average and above similar schools. Boys have achieved better than girls in recent years. At GCSE, the proportion of students achieving A*-C grades in 2003 was below average. Students made satisfactory progress in relation to their Year 9 results, but did less well than in their other subjects. One class of higher-attaining students additionally took three separate science GCSEs, most gaining grade C or better in all three and achieving as well as in their other subjects.
62. For current students, standards in Year 9 have recovered since last year's dip and are average. Achievement is satisfactory overall. However, students achieve considerably better in their knowledge and understanding of scientific facts and principles than in their enquiry skills. There are several reasons for this. The curriculum is well planned to build students' understanding of scientific concepts. Teachers make the learning relevant and give clear explanations. However, opportunities are often missed for students to speculate, predict and plan their own experiments – much practical work is illustrative, with students tending to follow instructions. As a result, many Year 9 students are not confident in making decisions for themselves when planning and carrying out an investigation and few consider ways of improving their experiments or explain anomalies without a lot of guidance. The inadequate curriculum time provided for Years 7 and 8 contributes to this weakness as teachers tend to focus on covering scientific knowledge. In addition, each class has three teachers for science in Year 9, which fragments the curriculum and hinders students' enquiry work. Students with special educational needs generally progress as well as others, and when they have a learning support assistant their progress is good.
63. Standards in Year 11 are below average but students' achievement is satisfactory overall. Higher-attaining students taking three separate sciences achieve well because in most lessons

they are taught well. However, many lower-attaining students could achieve more if lessons were more challenging. In the best lessons, students are all engaged in stimulating activities that enable them to take decisions, argue and explain; as when higher-attaining Year 11 students worked in groups to prepare class presentations on the nature of chemical bonding in specific substances. However, these approaches are not used enough, especially with the average and lower-attaining classes, where some students are less motivated as a result. In too many lessons, teachers' questions tend to require only recall or one-word answers, so that students seldom explain at length, discuss or speculate; this adversely affects their learning and involvement.

64. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. There is some good teaching, particularly of higher-attaining classes, and a little is unsatisfactory. Students are generally informed what they are going to learn and lessons are well structured. New scientific terms are given due emphasis and students are encouraged to apply them. ICT is generally used well to aid learning. Students do research on the internet and teachers use computer simulations to illustrate key ideas such as centripetal force in Year 11. However, students do not have enough opportunities to use electronic sensors and data-loggers, especially in Years 7 to 9. Where teaching is unsatisfactory, it is because students' behaviour deteriorates as a result of unchallenging work and they are not managed effectively to enable them to learn.
65. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Students' progress towards their targets is regularly monitored and action taken. Teaching is monitored through the performance management policy. However, analysis of patterns in students' performance, together with strengths and weaknesses in teaching and the curriculum are not used effectively to plan improvements or specific strategies for achieving the department's targets. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory: there has been an upward trend in standards, although the weakness in scientific enquiry skills identified then still remains.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well as a result of good teaching.
- The curriculum is relevant and provides a very broad insight into ICT.
- Students enjoy ICT and work hard.
- Assessment is used well to track students' progress and evaluate the quality of provision.
- Some other subjects do not provide enough opportunities to practise computer skills.

Commentary

66. Results in the 2003 GCSE and GNVQ examinations were average. Students gained better results in ICT than in their other subjects. Boys and girls gained similar grades. These results were an improvement on previous years and students made good progress in relation to their attainment at the end of Year 9.
67. For current students, standards in Year 9 are average. Students' understanding of the impact of computers in society is above average, and this makes an important contribution to their broader understanding of social issues. Their skills in using computers to model situations, such as how many fish different ponds will support, are also above average. Their database skills are below average and few higher-attaining students understand relational tables.
68. Students in Years 10 and 11 study ICT in one of three ways – a traditional GCSE, a vocational GCSE worth two passes, or a non-examination course. In the traditional GCSE course, standards are average. Students have an above average understanding of the impact of computers in society and higher-attaining students have a very clear understanding of

spreadsheets. Students' skills in the use of databases are not so well developed. Standards in the vocational GCSE are below average. This is due to past staffing difficulties which have now been resolved and the class is working very hard to catch up. Standards for students who do not take an examination in ICT are average because the college provides ICT lessons in Year 10 for all.

69. Achievement is good overall. On entry to the college, students' attainment in ICT is below average and they reach average standards. Students with English as an additional language achieve very well, with one girl predicted to gain a GCSE grade C after just one year. Students with special educational needs achieve as well as others overall, but occasionally the work they are set is too difficult and this hampers their progress. Achievement for the current Year 11 vocational class is unsatisfactory because they are unlikely to gain their predicted grades.
70. Teaching and learning are good because teachers use their very good subject knowledge to focus work on key skills and this accelerates learning. Teachers manage behaviour well and create a calm atmosphere in which students work hard. Students enjoy ICT because the work is challenging and set in a relevant business context. Students are set clear targets for the lesson and know precisely what they must do. In some lessons, teachers direct discussions too closely and do not give students enough opportunity to work independently.
71. Leadership is good and there is a team commitment to raising standards. The department is keen to develop new ideas and has enthusiastically adopted the ICT national strategy, which has broadened the curriculum considerably in Years 7 to 9. There has been a recent rapid growth in computer resources and teachers have been trained in the use of ICT. As yet, however, this has not had a major impact across the college and there are still not enough opportunities for students to practise their ICT skills in other subjects, which was an issue in the last inspection. Management is good. Assessment is used well to track students' progress and take action where progress is poor. Examination results are analysed carefully to develop a clear strategy for raising results.
72. There were many shortcomings at the time of the last inspection and improvement since then is good: the lack of computer resources has been resolved; the subject is now well managed; teaching and assessment have been improved and standards have risen.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

73. Students use ICT well to support their learning in several subjects, but across the whole curriculum they do not have enough opportunities to develop their computer skills. The modern languages department is well equipped with its own multi-media room and students do word processing and prepare presentations. Students use computers well in business lessons, though resources are limited as this is taught at St Gabriel's Convent. In design and technology, they gain good experience of computer-aided design and computer-aided manufacture. The music department has limited resources, but GCSE students make good use of composing software. In mathematics, students develop their data-handling skills and understanding of coordinates. Other subjects have not yet exploited the potential of ICT. In art, for example, computers are not used as a creative tool. Explanations in science are enhanced by simulations but students do not have enough opportunities to gather and analyse experimental data on computers. In the humanities subjects, ICT is not used sufficiently for students to do research and prepare presentations. The college is aware of this and is actively promoting further staff training. There are sufficient computers in the main school for subjects to have ready access.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well in Years 7 to 9 in relation to their attainment on entry.
- Classes are well managed and students respond well.
- Teachers are secure in their subject knowledge.
- Expectations in some classes are not high enough, especially for higher-attaining students.
- Teaching and learning are not monitored sufficiently in order to share good practice.
- Marking is inconsistent, with few constructive comments to help students improve their work.

Commentary

74. GCSE results in 2003 were well below average. A significant number of students, particularly boys, failed to gain a grade. Students achieved less well in geography than in their other subjects. Results were better in 2002, though they were below average. Girls did better than boys by more than is usual.
75. For current students, standards in Year 9 are below average. This is good achievement because their geographical attainment on entry to the college is well below average. Students have positive attitudes to their work, though they tend to be passive learners. They make good progress in learning to interpret and draw maps and in their knowledge of place. They develop an understanding of the characteristics of the weather and types of climate. In Year 9, they learn about types of economic activity and link these with a country's stage of development. However, many students' progress is limited by weak literacy and they are not given enough opportunities to develop their own thinking or their writing skills. In Year 11, the number of students taking GCSE is small and standards are below average. Most are working well and their notes are complete. Students' achievement in relation to their attainment at the end of Year 9 is satisfactory. Some students lack confidence and have a lot of difficulty in evaluating evidence and solving problems. Their skill in drawing graphs and diagrams is weak. Standards and student numbers are higher in Year 10. There is no significant difference between the standards reached by boys or girls. Students with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language make similar progress to other students.
76. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Teaching is often good but occasionally it is unsatisfactory. Teachers know their subject well and in most lessons planning is sound. Students are well managed and their learning is enhanced by their good response. The best lessons are well structured and students find them interesting and challenging. These lessons start with a brisk exercise to motivate and gain interest, include tasks that challenge all students to think and end with a review of what has been learned. In a good Year 9 lesson on weather, for example, students gained a thorough understanding of the causes of precipitation. Too many lessons, however, do not provide enough challenge, particularly for higher-attaining students. Students spend too much time copying from textbooks or the whiteboard, and have too few opportunities to carry out their own enquiries and write an account of their findings. Marking is a weakness as teachers provide very few constructive comments to help students improve their work. Spelling and grammatical errors are often not corrected. Homework is set regularly and often includes useful research tasks.
77. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The department is aware of the low standards at GCSE and is slowly raising standards and the number opting for the subject. Procedures are clear and schemes of work provide teachers satisfactory guidance. They would benefit teachers more, however, if more guidance were given on what students should know,

understand or be able to do by the end of each topic. There are satisfactory practical and fieldwork opportunities except in Year 9. Teaching and learning are not monitored systematically enough and there are not enough opportunities to share best practice. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory.

History

Provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are improving and students achieve well.
- Much teaching is very good but some does not provide enough opportunity for students to develop their ideas through discussion.
- Work is marked regularly, though marking does not always give specific guidance for improvement.
- Very good leadership and management are resulting in a very strong department deeply committed to improvement.

Commentary

78. GCSE results have been well below average for the last three years, but have improved over the last two. The Year 9 National Curriculum assessment results have also improved, with results matching the average in both 2002 and 2003. This trend of improvement is also seen in current standards, which are average in Year 9, and while still below, significantly closer to the average in Year 11. All students achieve well, and many students with special educational needs achieve very well.
79. Students make good progress in developing their historical knowledge, understanding and skills. In lessons they gain a good understanding of personalities and events. Year 9 higher-attaining students, for example, were insightful in describing the impact of Hitler's beliefs and motives. Most students use historical sources confidently to find evidence, but are sometimes less secure in judging their reliability. Students generally have a sound grasp of the sequence of events and readily empathise with people and conditions in the past. Written work varies in quality. Notes are usually detailed and well presented, but there are weaknesses in essay writing, even in the case of some higher-attaining Year 11 students. Essays are often not sufficiently well structured and have weak introductions and conclusions. They are often too descriptive, insufficiently analytical and argued, and while students' literacy skills are satisfactory, their writing style is often immature. Students' numeracy skills are sound and many make good use of ICT to present their work.
80. Teaching and learning are good. Students respond very well to teachers' high expectations and challenge. Teachers' very good subject knowledge and their clear, authoritative presentations enable students to understand complex issues such as the events leading to World War II. Very good understanding of how students learn results in work being well matched to their needs and ensures that all learn well. Lessons are very well planned and structured to sustain good pace and challenge. Innovative methods capture students' interest and inspire them to work at full stretch. This was particularly evident in the creative approach to revision in Year 11 lessons, which resulted in students being highly motivated to recall the work they had previously learned and improve their understanding. Teaching is highly interactive, with skilled questioning used to test students' knowledge and understanding, though opportunities are often missed to encourage students to develop their points fully or generate discussion. Classroom relationships are very good and foster good learning and productive group work. Historical skills are promoted strongly, but sometimes students are not encouraged sufficiently to understand the origin of historical sources or question their reliability. Literacy skills are exceptionally well supported. Homework is set regularly, though sometimes not enough time is allowed to provide clear guidance on its completion. Work is marked regularly, but not all marking provides

sufficiently detailed and specific guidance for improvement. Systematic and rigorous procedures are being developed for assessment but the day-to-day use of data to track students' progress and set targets for improvement is not sufficiently well established.

81. The clear trend of improvement and students' enthusiasm for history are the result of very good leadership and management. The head of department has a very clear vision and gives a strong lead. Practice is kept under constant review. All history teachers share a strong commitment to the achievement of excellence. Innovative approaches to curricular planning, including local history and visits to World War I battlefields, enhance students' enjoyment of history. Good progress has been made since the last inspection, especially in improving teaching and learning.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well as a result of good teaching.
- Boys do not do as well as girls in examinations.
- Students enjoy design and technology and work hard.
- In Years 7 to 9, students do not have enough opportunities to work independently.
- The curriculum is up to date and relevant, with a strong emphasis on business and enterprise.

Commentary

82. GCSE results in 2003 were below average but were an improvement over the previous year. Students did as well in design and technology as they did in their other subjects. Girls' results were better than those of boys. Students made satisfactory progress in relation to their attainment at the end of Year 9.
83. For current students, standards in Year 9 are below average. Students understand all the stages in the design process, but their work often lacks detail. Lower-attaining students achieve well in their design work, but higher-attaining students are restricted in producing independent designs by over-prescriptive workbooks. Students' understanding of the features of different materials and structures is better in textiles than in other parts of the course. Their practical skills are average and they use a good range of hand and machine tools safely and accurately. Standards in Year 11 are average. Students' designing skills and making skills are equally well developed and their coursework includes an appropriate balance of all aspects of the design process. The standard of girls' design work is higher than that of boys because it is usually complete; many boys' folders have some work missing. Students' finished products are of an average standard; in textiles they are above average and the best work is of a professional standard.
84. Achievement is good overall. It is very good in textiles as a result of the teacher's very high expectations. It is also very good in the Year 7 units on enterprise because the work is interesting and challenging. For a minority of boys in Year 11, their achievement is unsatisfactory because they do not meet coursework deadlines and their literacy standards are poor.
85. Teaching and learning are good and in half of lessons they are very good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and learning is enhanced because work is well focused on key skills. Students are well managed and work hard. They cover a lot in lessons because teachers move work along at a lively pace by setting deadlines for tasks. All students are fully included: for example, teachers ensure that wheelchair users play a full, active part in lessons. Learning is

well supported by regular homework that complements and extends lessons. In the very good lessons, students are highly motivated by teachers' enthusiasm. Expectations are very high and students have to work very hard to solve challenging problems. In a minority of less effective lessons, work is too closely managed and students have few opportunities to work independently.

86. Leadership is good and staff share a commitment to raising standards. The curriculum is regularly updated and the business and enterprise theme gives added relevance. Computer-aided design and manufacture have been successfully introduced, although other opportunities to use ICT are sometimes missed. Management is satisfactory. The department runs very smoothly on a day-to-day basis, but the analysis of results and the monitoring of students' progress in Years 10 and 11 is not tight enough. Design and technology makes a significant contribution to the extra-curricular programme. The Accomplice project, for example, has successfully raised students' awareness of the textiles business over a number of years. Improvement since the last inspection is good because good teaching has been sustained and standards have risen, particularly in design. New technology has been introduced. However, the department has not narrowed the gap between boys' and girls' GCSE results and this remains an issue.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and music were inspected in detail but drama was also sampled.

87. **Drama** is a new development. GCSE and possibly AS-level courses are due to be introduced in September 2004. Year 7 students (in only their fifth formal lesson) achieved very well in a lesson on the theme of journeys. There was a high degree of collaboration and students had a remarkably secure and practical grasp of techniques such as thought tracking, masking, blocking and tableau. The teaching was very good, both enthusing and challenging. Innovative curriculum organisation has led to a group of Year 9 students taking GCSE drama on a fast track basis after school each week. Their standards are above average for GCSE and well above average for the end of Year 9. The college is aware of the need to create more time for drama in Years 7 to 9 and of the need to improve the currently unsatisfactory accommodation and equipment for the subject.

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards have risen significantly since the last inspection.
- GCSE results are above average and students do much better than in their other subjects.
- Students achieve very well in their practical work and work confidently in two and three dimensions.
- Students' knowledge of the history and cultural context of art is underdeveloped and sketchbooks are not used well to develop ideas.
- ICT is not used enough for research or creative work.

Commentary

88. GCSE results were above average in 2002 and 2003, and a good proportion of students gained A* or A grades in 2003. Students of all abilities do well, often achieving much better grades than in their other subjects, although relatively few choose to take a GCSE in art.
89. For current students, standards in Year 9 are below average, but they achieve well in relation to their attainment on entry. In their practical work, they reach average standards in two and three-

dimensional work and often achieve very well. However, they do too little research into the history and cultural background of art and the quality of their sketchbooks, in which they record such work, is often well below average. Standards in Year 11 are average. Students achieve very well in their practical work, which is above average. However, they do not link this sufficiently with art history or theory during the creative process. They improve these aspects at a later stage in the course when they prepare their GCSE exhibition, but their understanding of artists' work and how it relates to their own remains weak. Students' attitudes and behaviour are good during practical work and contribute to their good achievement. In some younger, lower-attaining groups, however, restlessness prevents students from listening well to teachers. Many students are limited in their ability to participate in a discussion. All students, including talented artists, those with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language, achieve well overall.

90. Teaching and learning are good. Staff absences have affected students' progress, but satisfactory temporary arrangements were in place during the inspection. Practical skills are taught very well and, as a result, students become confident in their abilities to achieve good final pieces. Time is used well and students get a lot done in each lesson. Students need to learn how to record their research and investigations in their sketchbooks and to annotate these with their own ideas. Older students need to learn about the work of a wider range of artists of their own choosing. Students do not have enough opportunities to use ICT as a creative tool or to do their own research. They are given good informal guidance on how to improve their work, but marking and assessment are not used to give them specific targets to work towards.
91. Leadership and management are good and have led to good improvement since the last inspection. Standards have risen significantly in recent years, particularly at GCSE. The subject is given added relevance by a range of interesting visits, exhibitions and other links with real artists. These enable students to gain useful experience such as ways of making a living through art. A recent residential visit to St Ives, for example, gave higher-attaining students in Year 9 valuable insights into these aspects of enterprise.

Music

Provision in music is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement is very good in Year 11 and recent GCSE results have been high.
- Music makes a very good contribution to the spiritual life of the college.
- Good leadership has created a positive departmental ethos in which students' musical development is nurtured.
- Departmental work is not evaluated systematically enough.
- GCSE students use technology very well but a lack of computers limits the achievement of other students.

Commentary

92. GCSE results in 2003 were well above average and the small number of students achieved, on average, two grades higher than they did in their other subjects.
93. Standards in Year 9 are average. Students join the college with below average standards and achieve well. They learn about a range of musical styles and compose and perform simple pieces in response to a range of stimuli. Standards in the current Year 11 are above average, which is very good achievement as the group contains students with a range of abilities. Students make very good use of technology to develop and refine their compositions, and they perform with confidence and a sense of style. The current Year 10 group is less motivated and their standards are below average.

94. Teaching is good overall, with some very good features. In the best lessons, students are fully engaged in music making throughout and are inspired by their own successes. This is particularly the case in vocal activities, where a well-chosen repertoire and a good emphasis on singing technique result in music that students value. Lower-attaining students are taught in smaller classes and are very well supported by the teacher and by learning support assistants. Talented students are given good opportunities to extend their skills in and beyond lessons. Teachers are always well organised and clear in their explanations and expectations. In some weaker lessons, the activities are not structured sufficiently to enable students to make progress, which results in less positive attitudes. There is sometimes too much emphasis on music theory that is not relevant to students' needs. The quality of marking is good and in most classes students are encouraged to evaluate their work and recognise what they need to do to improve.
95. Committed leadership has created a departmental ethos which nurtures students' individual musical interests. Outside lessons, students engage in music informally under staff guidance. They form their own bands and recently a group of Year 9 boys won a local radio competition. Music lessons and extra-curricular activities contribute well to students' spiritual development. The Year 7 creative arts course, for example, gives students a good opportunity to express themselves through music in a spiritual context. Students have many opportunities to perform. Good links with the local education authority's music service and the music business further enrich their experiences. Management is satisfactory. The department runs smoothly, but the procedures for evaluating its work are not rigorous enough. It is well resourced, although the equipment is distributed unevenly between the teaching rooms and this limits students' progress. There are only two computers, which restricts students' use of ICT in composing music. Good progress has been made since the last inspection and music has maintained its high profile within the college. The department is now very well staffed.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is very good and results in above average standards and very good achievement.
- The provision for students with physical disabilities is very good.
- There is a very good range of extra-curricular activities and high standards are reached.
- Students' skills in coaching and evaluating their own work are not sufficiently developed.

Commentary

96. Standards in Year 9 are above average and students achieve very well. They do particularly well in games such as cricket and rounders and in athletics. They develop good ball skills and use strategies effectively in competitive situations. Lower-attaining students are less confident in transferring their skills into a competitive game but achieve well relative to their ability. Racket skills are average. Students understand the rules but struggle to maintain a rally. Students' skills in evaluating their own performance are not always well developed.
97. In Years 10 and 11, all students follow a core course and about one fifth opt to take a GCSE. Standards in the core course are above average and students achieve well. Many students play games with accuracy and refinement and are developing the ability to evaluate their performance. They successfully take on the role of coach or official. Students with special educational needs and those from minority ethnic groups achieve as well as others. There is a particularly good programme and additional support for students with physical disabilities, enabling them to take part in all lessons and also to try more unusual activities such as fencing, archery and clay pigeon shooting.

98. GCSE results in 2003 were below average but most students did as well as in their other subjects. Current standards in Year 11 are above average in theory and practical activities. Standards are higher than the recent results because the students are more capable and because teaching has been matched better to students' individual abilities. Achievement overall is very good. Higher and middle-attaining students complete coursework to a good standard. It is well planned and researched and carried out accurately. Lower-attaining students' work is not always complete and evaluations of their work are not well focused.
99. Teaching is very good overall. In most lessons the teachers inspire students by setting challenging tasks and communicating high expectations. They use questions well to develop students' technical vocabulary and their understanding of health-related fitness. However, there are too few opportunities for students to evaluate each other's work and become more confident in using their technical vocabulary. Students' very good attitudes help them to learn at a very good rate. In a few lessons, however, expectations are not so high and students are consequently less diligent in practising skills. Students and teachers use demonstration effectively to highlight correct technique. All the teachers are good role models. The teaching of theory in GCSE classes is very good. Homework is set regularly and is linked well to coursework, though it does not always extend the most able.
100. There is a very good extra-curricular programme, with many activities and a high level of participation. Individuals and teams enjoy success at local, county and national levels. Talented students achieve very well and are involved in many schemes in the district and county. Very good links with the community ensure that students have good access to clubs outside school.
101. Leadership and management are very good. There is a clear direction and very good team spirit. The challenging and caring ethos adds positively to students' personal and social development. Very good progress has been made since the last inspection. Standards have improved despite a dip in GCSE results in 2003. The poor state of the all-weather pitch remains an issue and teaching would benefit from a specialist classroom for GCSE theory lessons.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

Business was the focus of the inspection but GCSE applied health and social care was also sampled.

102. Standards in **health and social care** are above average. One Year 11 lesson was observed, in which teaching was good. Students were skilfully prepared for the forthcoming examination through evaluating the quality of their own answers on a practice paper. They demonstrated a good understanding of the concepts of self-esteem and self-image. Expectations were high and students responded positively.

Business

Provision in business is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is very good and enables students to achieve very well.
- Leadership and management are very good and good progress is being made in developing business and enterprise skills.
- There are good links with the world of business to enable students to relate theory to practice.
- Accommodation is unsatisfactory and does not provide a well-resourced business environment.

Commentary

103. GCSE applied business was examined for the first time in 2003. Results at the higher A*-C grades were above average, but a number of lower-attaining students, mainly girls, failed to achieve a grade. Boys achieved very well and did better than the girls.
104. For current students, standards in Year 11 are above average and they achieve very well. All are in line to achieve a grade in 2004, with a high percentage on course for A*-C grades. There is no significant difference currently between the standards reached by girls or boys. Students with special educational needs achieve as well as others. Students have a very good knowledge of business practices, which in Year 11 is enhanced by links with Debenhams and Chester Zoo. They have a good understanding of the factors that need to be considered in locating a business and the external influences that affect a business. Students are very good at working independently on their assignments. Their files are well organised and indicate a good knowledge of financial systems and the flow of business documents.
105. Teaching and learning are very good. Teaching is characterised by very good subject knowledge and detailed lesson planning. In a very well planned revision lesson, for example, Year 11 students consolidated and extended their knowledge of how to forecast cash flow and the movement of business documentation. Lessons proceed at a very good pace and students are motivated by teachers' high expectations. They are challenged by the work and have very good attitudes. They are encouraged to learn independently and to think for themselves. In a Year 10 lesson, students worked in groups to research the factors that determined the location of businesses in Manchester. Case studies and links with business are used very effectively to enable them to relate theoretical knowledge to real situations. Students' work is assessed thoroughly and they are given constructive feedback on how to make improvements.
106. The subject is very well led and managed within the applied GCSE department. The head of department is very well organised and has a clear vision for the development of the subject. A small, very effective team has been established. The teachers have recent commercial experience and use this productively in developing the curriculum. Assignments are very well written and prepare students well for their coursework and examinations. The accommodation at St Gabriel's Convent is unsatisfactory because it does not provide a suitable modern business environment. Resources are lacking and the time allocated to the subject is low compared to lessons at the main site. Achievement is high despite these problems because of the hard work of the talented teachers and positive attitudes of students. Since the last inspection, standards have risen and improvement has been good.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Citizenship was inspected in detail but personal, social and health education (PSHE) was sampled.

107. The quality of provision in **personal, social and health education** has improved since the last inspection. All the required aspects are taught using a good variety of methods and are well supported by visiting speakers such as the police and fire service. The course reflects the college's strong ethos and makes a major contribution to students' personal and social development. Several lessons were observed, in which teaching was good. The lessons were well structured and engaged students through interesting activities. The amount of time allocated to personal, social and health education has been reduced with the introduction of citizenship into the same timetable slot.

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Planning is good, with a clear vision for the development of the subject.
- Citizenship makes a good contribution to students' personal development, with many taking active roles in the college and the local community.
- Achievement is limited by the low time allocation for lessons in citizenship.
- Assessment procedures are not yet closely linked to National Curriculum attainment levels.

Commentary

108. Citizenship is promoted in three ways – through weekly citizenship lessons in the personal, social and health education programme, through citizenship themes taught in other subjects and through a very good enrichment programme.
109. Standards in Year 9 are below average, but students' achievement is satisfactory. Students' gain a limited knowledge of legal and political institutions, though many are not confident to articulate their points of view. Through many practical opportunities they develop their concern for others and understanding of a community. By Year 11, standards are average and students achieve well. They become more confident in doing their own research and in explaining their views orally or in writing. Research is often done thoroughly and students are able to interpret their findings. A few more confident students are fully aware of the qualities of a good citizen and use the knowledge they have learned to debate issues effectively. Many have an insight into human rights.
110. Teaching is satisfactory overall. In citizenship lessons, teachers have a good knowledge of the topics and plan lessons well. Question and answer sessions promote debate and engage students, for example, in planning events for charity or community projects. Most students have good attitudes, though some become less interested when tasks are not challenging or if their behaviour is not well managed. The contributions that other subjects make to citizenship have been planned and are included in their schemes of work. In some cases, these are very well planned and students are made aware that they are learning about citizenship. In ICT, for example, students learn about responsible use of the internet and the influence of computers on society. The planning of citizenship themes in some other subjects is not so thorough and teachers need to make the link more explicit to students.
111. Students' skills of participation and responsible action are developed well in the enrichment programme. Many students are involved and at present this has more impact on their understanding of citizenship than lessons do. In one activity, students made a CD for primary school pupils to prepare them for their arrival at their secondary school. Some Year 11 students become buddies to Year 7 students to help them settle into their new school. Other students are peer mentors and use their own personal experience to help younger students. Older students regularly help in games clubs. Many speak positively about their involvement in these schemes, which build their own self-esteem. Some of the activities help students to understand their rights and responsibilities in a democratic society. Year 8 students took part in a mock Euro referendum, with Year 11 students canvassing and helping to run the debate. The school council helps students to understand the role of a delegate in a democratic society. Teachers are successful in motivating many students to become involved in citizenship activities.
112. Leadership and management are good. There is a clear vision for the development of the subject and great care is taken over planning, especially for students' active role as citizens in the community. Assessment is at an early stage of development and is not yet closely linked to National Curriculum attainment levels. The amount of time allocated to citizenship lessons is low and this restricts the depth to which it can be taught. Further monitoring of teaching is required, together with training for some teachers of other subjects who are not confident in highlighting the citizenship themes within their subject.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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