

St Charles Catholic Sixth Form College

**REPORT FROM
THE INSPECTORATE
1997-98**

**THE
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EDUCATION
FUNDING
COUNCIL**

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FUNDING COUNCIL***

The Further Education Funding Council has a legal duty to make sure further education in England is properly assessed. The FEFC's inspectorate inspects and reports on each college of further education according to a four-year cycle. It also assesses and reports nationally on the curriculum, disseminates good practice and advises the FEFC's quality assessment committee.

College inspections are carried out in accordance with the framework and guidelines described in Council Circulars 97/12, 97/13 and 97/22. Inspections seek to validate the data and judgements provided by colleges in self-assessment reports. They involve full-time inspectors and registered part-time inspectors who have knowledge of, and experience in the work they inspect. A member of the Council's audit service works with inspectors in assessing aspects of governance and management. All colleges are invited to nominate a senior member of their staff to participate in the inspection as a team member.

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Grade Descriptors

Inspectors assess the strengths and weaknesses of each aspect of provision they inspect. Their assessments are set out in the report. They use a five-point scale to summarise the balance between strengths and weaknesses.

The descriptors for the grades are:

- grade 1 – outstanding provision which has many strengths and few weaknesses
- grade 2 – good provision in which the strengths clearly outweigh the weaknesses
- grade 3 – satisfactory provision with strengths but also some weaknesses
- grade 4 – less than satisfactory provision in which the weaknesses clearly outweigh the strengths
- grade 5 – poor provision which has few strengths and many weaknesses.

Aggregated grades for aspects of cross-college provision, curriculum areas and lesson observations, for colleges inspected during 1996-97, are shown in the following table.

	Grade				
	1	2	3	4	5
	%	%	%	%	%
Curriculum areas	9	59	30	2	–
Cross-college provision	18	51	27	4	–
Lesson observations	19	42	31	7	1

Source: *Quality and Standards in Further Education in England 1996-97: Chief inspector's annual report*. Grades were awarded using the guidelines in Council Circular 93/28, *Assessing Achievement*.
Sample size: 122 college inspections

Retention and Pass Rates

Where data on students' achievements appear in tables, levels of achievement are shown in two ways:

- as a retention rate, which is the proportion of students who completed a course in relation to the number enrolled on 1 November in the first year of the course
- as a pass rate, which is the proportion of students which passed examinations in relation to the number entered. Pass rates for GCE A level are quoted for grades A to E unless otherwise specified. Pass rates for GCSE courses are quoted for grade C or above unless otherwise specified. Pass rates for vocational and professional awards are for successful completion of the full award.

Summary

St Charles Catholic Sixth Form College

Greater London Region

Inspected November 1997

St Charles Catholic Sixth Form College in the Archdiocese of Westminster produced a thorough and detailed self-assessment report. The judgements in the report were supported by clear evidence. Most of the grades which the college awarded itself were the same as those given by the inspectors. In a few instances, strengths were overstated in the report and the inspectors found some weaknesses which were not identified by the college.

The college's Roman Catholic ethos permeates all aspects of the work of the college. The college offers a good range of GCE A level and GCSE subjects and provides vocational courses for full-time students aged 16 to 19. Courses are well managed and the teaching is of a high standard. Students' achievements are generally good and some are excellent. The proportion of lessons graded as good or outstanding by inspectors has risen by 5 percentage points since the last inspection. No lessons inspected were judged to be less than satisfactory or poor. The provision in business, English, religious education and philosophy is outstanding. Students are provided with an exceptional range of support services and enrichment activities.

The college meets the needs of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The students and staff in this well-managed college benefit from high-quality resources and an attractive environment. There is an emphasis on traditional values such as respect for others, self-discipline and honesty. Effective management ensures that the Catholic identity of the college is maintained and developed. Communications are good throughout the college. The college is well governed by committed governors who have established generally effective procedures for conducting their business. Through its improved quality assurance and self-assessment procedures, the college has identified most of the major issues which need to be addressed. These include: poor results and retention rates on some courses; insufficient open access to the learning support facilities; insufficient links between quality assurance and strategic planning; and the lack of formal procedures to ensure consistency in the implementation of the quality assurance policy.

The grades awarded as a result of the inspection are given below.

Curriculum area	Grade	Cross-college provision	Grade
Sciences, mathematics and computing	2	Support for students	1
Business studies	1	General resources	1
Art and design, media studies and performing arts	2	Quality assurance	2
English, religious education and philosophy	1	Governance	2
Modern languages	2	Management	1

The College and its Mission

1 St Charles Catholic Sixth Form College was opened in September 1990 following the reorganisation of Roman Catholic secondary education in the central area of the Archdiocese of Westminster. The college occupies a small, attractive site in North Kensington. There are three buildings; one is purpose built and two are former school buildings. The college has four partner schools, two of which are single-sex girls' schools. At the time of the inspection, the college employed 82 members of staff.

2 There are sizeable communities of Spanish, Portuguese and Italian residents in the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea. About 16 per cent of the local population comprise minority ethnic groups. Some 20 per cent of local residents are self-employed. Ninety per cent of jobs are in the service sector. A substantial proportion of the borough's residents work in other boroughs. The population of Kensington and Chelsea is characterised by extremes of wealth and poverty.

3 The college has about 900 full-time students aged 16 to 19. Just over one-third of its students come from the partner schools; the others are drawn from schools in 17 of the London boroughs. Some 60 per cent of the students are female. Seventy-five per cent of the students are Roman Catholic; the rest are mainly Christians of other denominations. About half of the students are of Spanish, Portuguese, South American or Italian origin; some 38 per cent identify themselves as black. The first language of over one-third of the students is not English. More than half the students come from homes with a low income.

4 The mission of the college is to provide high-quality Catholic education for students of all abilities and backgrounds. In pursuit of its mission, the college aims to build a community based on explicitly Christian values in which the potential of each student is fulfilled to its maximum.

Context

The Inspection

5 The college was inspected during the week beginning 10 November 1997. In planning and carrying out the inspection, the team used the college's self-assessment report and information about the college held by other divisions of the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC). The inspection was carried out by eight inspectors, including a nominated Catholic inspector and an auditor working for a total of 34 days.

Inspectors observed 60 lessons, examined students' work and a variety of documents, and held meetings with governors, managers, staff and students.

6 Of the lessons inspected, 80 per cent were outstanding or good and none were less than satisfactory or poor. This is better than the profile of 61 per cent and 8 per cent, respectively, for colleges inspected between 1996-97 according to *Quality and Standards in Further Education in England 1996-97: Chief inspector's annual report*. The average level of attendance in the lessons inspected was 83 per cent. The following table shows the grades awarded to the lessons inspected.

Lessons: inspection grades by programme of study

Programme	Grade					Totals
	1	2	3	4	5	
GCE A/AS level	13	14	9	0	0	36
GCSE	3	5	2	0	0	10
GNVQ	4	4	0	0	0	8
Other	2	3	1	0	0	6
Total	22	26	12	0	0	60

Curriculum Areas

Sciences, Mathematics and Computing

Grade 2

7 Inspectors observed 14 lessons covering general certificate of education advanced level (GCE A level) and general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) subjects in sciences, computing and mathematics. The college's self-assessment report identified the major strengths and weaknesses of the provision and the inspectors agreed with these.

Key strengths

- the excellent pass rates and significant value-added factor in GCE A level computing for the last three years
- good results in most GCSE subjects
- well-managed courses and good-quality teaching and learning
- the good relationships between staff and well-motivated students
- the effective use of targets in reviewing students' performance
- the up-to-date and well-maintained equipment
- the students' neat, detailed and well-structured written work
- the students' good oral communication skills and their ability to organise and share tasks

Weaknesses

- poor retention rates in GCE A level computing
- the significant number of students who complete some, but not all, units of modular courses
- the limited range of learning activities in some lessons
- insufficient use of information technology in most subjects

8 The college offers GCSE and GCE A level courses in biology, chemistry, physics and mathematics, and computing at GCE A level. All students on GCSE and GCE A level courses study for the City and Guilds of London Institute (C&G) key skills certificate in information technology at level 2. There is no provision at foundation level in mathematics for students on non-vocational courses. Courses are well managed. The heads of science subjects meet together regularly to discuss operational and policy issues. Although agendas are not circulated before meetings, minutes are produced and form a record of discussions.

9 The inspectors agreed with the judgement in the self-assessment report that the quality of teaching and learning is good. Well-qualified teachers communicate their enthusiasm to the students. In the best science lessons, practical work was successfully related to theory. A range of resources was used to illustrate key points. Examples of the applications of science in everyday situations stimulated and maintained students' interest. Directed questions were used effectively to involve students in discussions. The good relationships between staff and students were identified in the self-assessment report. Students support each other well and work effectively in teams, particularly in practical sessions. In the weaker lessons, there was a lack of variety in activities undertaken by the students, some of whom lost concentration. Students regularly review their progress with their teachers and set targets for their own future performance. Through this review process, the students are encouraged and challenged to improve their attainments.

10 Staff and students benefit from high-quality accommodation. The laboratories provide an environment which is conducive to learning and contain furniture which can easily be moved around to suit the activities in lessons. Up-to-date and well-maintained equipment is available in sufficient quantity to enable students to develop good practical skills. The materials

Curriculum Areas

and posters on display give the teaching rooms and laboratories a clear identification with a particular subject.

11 Most students' files are well organised and indicate that the students are acquiring appropriate note-taking skills. Students' written work is generally neat, detailed, well structured and of a suitable standard. Moderators' reports note the accuracy of teachers' marking and the willingness of staff to respond positively to suggestions. Few students wordprocess their written work or make use of computer packages such as spreadsheets to analyse and display the results of their experiments. Students have well-developed oral communication skills and are able to discuss their work with confidence.

12 Pass rates in GCE A level biology, chemistry, mathematics and physics are comparable with national figures for sixth form

colleges. In chemistry, the pass rate improved significantly when a modular syllabus was introduced. In its self-assessment report, the college records the outstanding pass rates in GCE A level computing, and recognises that the achievements of some students are better than those predicted for them on the basis of their grades at GCSE. The self-assessment report also notes that the retention rates have been consistently low. All GCE A level courses, with the exception of computing, are modular and in some subjects a significant number of students successfully complete some units only and they do not obtain the full qualification. The proportion of students who obtained grade C or above in GCSE subjects is above the national average, with the exception of biology and mathematics. However, results in biology and mathematics improved significantly in 1996-97 as a result of actions taken by teachers.

Examples of students' achievements in sciences, mathematics and computing, 1995 to 1997

Course grouping		1995	1996	1997
GCE A level biology	Retention (%)	73	63	67
	Pass rate (%)	88	89	85
GCE A level chemistry	Retention (%)	63	77	77
	Pass rate (%)	50	92	83
GCE A level computing	Retention (%)	55	35	38
	Pass rate (%)	100	100	100
GCE A level mathematics	Retention (%)	81	77	79
	Pass rate (%)	100	63	97
GCSE biology	Retention (%)	100	78	81
	Pass rate (%)	37	29	53
GCSE chemistry	Retention (%)	89	81	89
	Pass rate (%)	86	77	100
GCSE mathematics	Retention (%)	87	88	86
	Pass rate (%)	37	34	43
GCSE physics	Retention (%)	85	86	80
	Pass rate (%)	64	67	60

Source: college data

Curriculum Areas

Business Studies

Grade 1

13 The inspection covered the entire range of business courses offered by the college. Inspectors observed 11 lessons. The college's self-assessment report in respect of business studies is comprehensive and the inspection team agreed with most of its judgements.

Key strengths

- the well-managed provision
- well-prepared lessons with clear aims and objectives
- much excellent teaching
- the constructive and comprehensive assessment of students' work by teachers
- the students' proficiency in information technology skills
- outstanding or good examination results in all courses
- pass rates in GCE A level business studies higher than those predicted for students on the basis of their prior achievements
- excellent retention rates on secretarial studies and general national vocational qualification (GNVQ) courses

Weaknesses

- the declining retention rate on the GCE A level business studies course

14 The college offers courses leading to GNVQs in business at all levels, GCE A level business studies, and intermediate and advanced secretarial studies courses. The provision meets the needs of a wide range of students. Some students have progressed within the college from the foundation GNVQ programme in business to advanced courses. Students on the advanced GNVQ business course run successful young enterprise schemes which

give them the opportunity to apply the business skills they have learned to the management of their own company. As part of this scheme, they have won two prizes including a best marketing prize. They have recently represented the Inner London Area Board at international finals. Inspectors agreed with the college's judgement that this is a strength.

15 Courses are managed well by an experienced team of teachers who have developed detailed policies and procedures and have clearly-defined roles and responsibilities. Targets for pass rates and retention rates are set and achieved. Communications between staff are good. Team managers are continually seeking to improve standards and share good practice. Teachers observe one another's work in the classroom in order that they may regularly evaluate teaching methods. Staff are well qualified and most have obtained the relevant assessor and verifier awards. In order to keep their commercial experience up to date, teachers participate in a scheme which provides them with industrial and commercial placements. As a result of this scheme, opportunities for work experience for students have increased and speakers from firms and companies visit the college to tell the students about practical issues in the world of work which are relevant to their course.

16 Lessons are well prepared and have clear aims and objectives. They are taught effectively and a wide range of teaching strategies is used to maintain students' interest and extend their learning. Teachers continually check students' learning during lessons. The secretarial studies teaching is particularly effective. Students are acquiring good secretarial skills which are valued by employers. There is a strong emphasis on the correct use of grammar and students are required to check their work carefully. Students are continually reminded of the value of being able to spell correctly and they are urged not to rely solely on the spell-check facility within wordprocessing

Curriculum Areas

packages. Teachers' assessment of students' work on all courses is rigorous and constructive, and it gives students clear guidance on ways of achieving improvement.

17 The library provision is good. The high-quality facilities for information technology are used effectively in order to help students to acquire information technology skills. In particular, these facilities are well used on the GNVQ foundation course where the students are familiar with the equipment, work at a brisk pace, and use graphics to improve the presentation of their work. Students work purposefully in lessons and most contribute eagerly to discussions.

18 The college recognises in its self-assessment report that the students' achievements are a strength. Pass rates on all courses range from good to excellent. Students consistently achieve better results in GCE A level business studies than those predicted for them on the basis of their grades in GCSE examinations. The pass rate in GCE A level business studies was 100 per cent in 1996 and 1997. The proportion of students obtaining

grades A to C in these two years was 59 per cent and 81 per cent, respectively. The department's self-assessment report did not identify the declining retention on GCE A level business studies as a weakness. However, the college has recognised that the retention rates on some two-year courses are not satisfactory and it has taken steps to address the issue. The retention rates on all other business courses are very good.

Examples of students' achievements in business studies, 1995 to 1997

Course grouping		1995	1996	1997
Advanced GNVQ	Retention (%)	65	72	90
	Pass rate (%)	94	92	84
Intermediate GNVQ	Retention (%)	91	96	91
	Pass rate (%)	76	77	100
Foundation GNVQ	Retention (%)	93	92	86
	Pass rate (%)	77	100	75
GCE A level business studies	Retention (%)	88	67	68
	Pass rate (%)	68	100	100
Secretarial studies intermediate	Retention (%)	81	86	93
	Pass rate (%)	69	81	87
Secretarial studies advanced	Retention (%)	88	100	100
	Pass rate (%)	86	100	100

Source: college data

Curriculum Areas

Art and Design, Media Studies and Performing Arts

Grade 2

19 Inspectors observed 10 lessons covering GNVQ programmes in art and design, and GCSE and GCE A level subjects in art and design, media studies and the performing arts. The self-assessment report for this subject area was comprehensive and provided sound supporting evidence for the judgements made. The inspection team agreed with the college's identification of strengths and weaknesses although some weaknesses had not been analysed in sufficient depth. Inspectors considered that some data on students' achievements were not analysed with enough care and too little attention was paid to poor retention rates.

Key strengths

- a good range of courses offering general education and vocational options
- well-planned and effectively-managed courses
- the key role of information technology in the curriculum
- good teaching
- the encouragement given to students to participate in demanding learning activities
- consistently good pass rates for GCE A levels in art and design, media studies and music
- the students' success in progressing to higher education
- the high-quality resources
- the good range of additional educational experiences for students such as visits to art galleries

Weaknesses

- in less successful lessons, the insufficient involvement of students in learning activities
- some low pass rates and poor retention rates
- insufficient sharing of facilities by related subject areas

20 The college offers a good range of general education and vocational courses. The students have good opportunities to gain relevant and enriching experience beyond the requirements of their course syllabus. Courses are well planned and efficiently managed. Schemes of work, projects and assignments are well matched to the syllabuses and the course requirements. The use of information technology is firmly embedded in the teaching and learning of most subjects and students use sophisticated equipment with ease, particularly in music and media studies. Media studies teachers have particularly good links with the industry. The self-assessment report for music included a plan for new marketing strategies and for making the courses more attractive to young people. This is being implemented. Art teachers have taken part in work placements to update their industrial and commercial experience.

21 Most teaching is good. Well-qualified teachers encourage the full participation of students in lessons which frequently challenge them to think and use initiative. There is strong support available to students, many of whom are beginning courses, such as music, with little background experience. Students in a GCSE music lesson were working with enthusiasm and commitment. They produced some well-structured and imaginative pieces and demonstrated that they were developing performance skills. In a GCE A level theatre studies lesson students were working co-operatively on the preparation of a

Curriculum Areas

demanding performance. In less successful lessons, some students lost concentration and were not sufficiently involved in the learning activities.

22 The specialist resources and equipment are of a high quality. The theatre provides excellent accommodation for performance; music students have access to a good range of facilities including modern technology for composition and performance; media studies students use high-quality editing and production equipment. There is further scope for subject areas to share these facilities. There is good collaboration between the librarian and curriculum leaders to provide a lively and vigorous learning resource centre which includes a CD-ROM database facility and access to the Internet.

23 Students are developing their skills and they are acquiring knowledge. Their work in their portfolios, in the classroom and on exhibition around the college was frequently of

a high quality and it was often bold and exciting. In an essay on Mozart's operas, a student demonstrated good analytical skills based on sound research. Following a visit to London Zoo, art and design students produced large-scale sculptures of animals in materials as diverse as chicken wire and papier maché. Their work was exhibited in a local professional development centre for teachers. There have been some good pass rates on many courses. In media studies, the results are better than those predicted for the students on the basis of their GCSE grades. However, as the college recognises in its self-assessment report, there have also been some low pass rates and low retention rates, for example pass rates in GCE A level design and advanced GNVQ art and design. Across the programme area as a whole, students have been successful in progressing to higher education.

Examples of students' achievements in art and design, media studies and performing arts, 1995 to 1997

Course grouping		1995	1996	1997
GCE A level art and design	Retention (%)	77	73	76
	Pass rate (%)	94	80	96
GCE A level media studies	Retention (%)	80	71	74
	Pass rate (%)	97	100	98
GCE A level music	Retention (%)	33	67	100
	Pass rate (%)	100	100	100
GCE A level theatre studies	Retention (%)	85	94	67
	Pass rate (%)	82	53	72
GCE A level design	Retention (%)	85	56	62
	Pass rate (%)	82	80	38
Advanced GNVQ art and design	Retention (%)	92	76	74
	Pass rate (%)	50	62	43
Foundation GNVQ art and design	Retention (%)	82	62	83
	Pass rate (%)	22	75	60

Source: college data

Curriculum Areas

English, Religious Education and Philosophy

Grade 1

24 The inspection covered courses in English and religious education. Inspectors observed 13 lessons. The self-assessment report identified strengths and weaknesses of the provision and the inspection team agreed with most of these.

Key strengths

- very good GCE A level pass rates and a high proportion of grades A to C in Christian theology
- good GCE A level pass rates in English and philosophy
- well-planned and effectively-managed courses
- very good teaching
- effective support for students
- good learning resources
- the enrichment activities for students

Weaknesses

- the low proportion of students gaining grade C or above in GCSE English language in 1995 and 1996

25 The college offers GCE A level English literature, English language and literature, Christian theology, and philosophy. There are GCSE courses in English language and religious studies. In addition, there is a programme in religious education for all students at the college which is accredited by the RSA Examinations Board (RSA). The courses are well planned and managed. In religious education in particular, a thorough approach to planning has led to detailed documents and a range of relevant learning materials which are well presented and carefully organised. However, the general religious education programme contains limited

references to other world faiths and repeats topics which students may have covered at school. Teachers know their students well, provide them with support and help them with their coursework outside lessons and tutorials.

26 The college recognises that the quality of the teaching is a strength. Inspectors considered that the teaching was outstanding in more than two-thirds of the lessons observed. Teachers are well qualified and confident of their subject knowledge. There are lively exchanges in lessons and students respond well to tasks which challenge them to think and use a range of skills. A strong emphasis is placed on work involving oral communication and on the effective use of language generally. Teachers ask thought-provoking questions. In a GCE A level philosophy lesson, students discussed the differences between pleasure and happiness. The teacher's knowledgeable exposition and probing questions helped students to explore the issue in considerable depth. In a general religious education lesson, the teacher made effective use of the video-tape recording of *To Kill a Mocking Bird* to introduce some issues surrounding equality and discrimination. By working together, students developed their views in a focused and thoughtful manner.

27 Both departments have developed a good range of learning resources which are readily accessible to students. Text books are in good condition. Articles and extracts from newspapers, journals and books are clearly reproduced. Library books, journals, audiovisual materials, CD-ROM databases and Internet facilities are carefully selected. In their self-assessment report, teachers recognise the strength of broadening students' experience through outings to the theatre, and to art galleries, attendance at conferences and participation in overseas visits, such as a recent trip to Athens by philosophy students.

28 In their assignments and their contributions in class, students reach the high standards expected by their teachers. Teachers

Curriculum Areas

hold team meetings and they also meet informally to discuss the courses and to moderate their marking of students' work. GCE A level pass rates are excellent in Christian theology and in philosophy. Pass rates have been consistently high in GCE A level English. The proportion of students who obtained grade C or above in GCSE religious studies is well above the national average. The proportion of students who obtain grade C or above in GCSE English language increased considerably in 1997 and matched the national average.

Examples of students' achievements in English, religious education and philosophy, 1995 to 1997

Course grouping		1995	1996	1997
GCE A level English literature	Retention (%)	80	73	79
	Pass rate (%)	97	94	98
GCE A level Christian theology	Retention (%)	86	100	90
	Pass rate A to C (%)	39	81	81
	Pass rate (%)	94	100	96
GCE A level philosophy	Retention (%)	75	46	73
	Pass rate (%)	88	100	100
GCSE English language	Retention (%)	90	85	88
	Pass rate (%)	35	27	48
GCSE religious studies	Retention (%)	89	87	75
	Pass rate (%)	80	60	100

Source: college data

Curriculum Areas

Modern Languages

Grade 2

29 Inspectors observed 12 lessons covering GCE A level courses in Spanish, French, Portuguese, Italian and German and GCSE courses in French and Spanish. The inspection team agreed with the college's comprehensive assessment of its strengths in modern languages. Inspectors concluded that the college was not self-critical enough, however, in identifying some weaknesses.

Key strengths

- well-qualified staff
- the use of the foreign language being taught as the principal means of communication in lessons
- the wide range of languages offered at GCE A level
- consistently good GCE A level pass rates in Spanish, Italian and Portuguese
- the students' success in meeting the high expectations of staff for punctuality, attendance and commitment to their work
- learning activities which stimulate students' interest
- results at grades C or above in GCSE French and Spanish consistently above national averages
- the teachers' accurate marking of students' written work

Weaknesses

- a lack of variety of appropriate teaching styles
- the declining retention rates on GCE A level French and Spanish courses over the past three years
- poor GCE A level German pass rates in 1995 and 1996

- insufficient provision of language studies for students other than those taking modern languages at GCE A level or in the GCSE

30 The college recognises that the courses are managed effectively. Teachers meet regularly to review teaching methods, retention rates, examination results and students' progress. There are schemes of work for courses, most of which are detailed and informative. There are no modern language courses available for students whose GCE or GCSE programmes do not include a modern language or for those on vocational courses. Foreign language courses are not included in the college's enrichment programme.

31 The well-qualified staff have high expectations of students in terms of their attendance, punctuality and commitment to their studies and the students meet these well. Overall, the quality of the teaching is good. The language being taught is the principal means of communication in lessons. Teachers set varied tasks at an appropriate level and students work on these with interest and enthusiasm. Relationships between teachers and students are very good. In an effective, well-prepared GCE A level French lesson, students watched part of a film directed by Truffaut. The teacher questioned the students, making good use of simple vocabulary and encouraged them to discuss the characters and the director's skill. However, in many lessons, students did not have enough opportunity to develop their language skills by working together in groups. Students were willing and able to express themselves in the language being taught, but in some instances, teachers missed opportunities to encourage them to communicate more freely.

32 Modern languages resources are very good. The accommodation is spacious and well maintained. The library has a wide range of books, magazines, audio and video-tapes, CD-ROM databases and facilities which connect

Curriculum Areas

with the Internet. A 16-booth language laboratory is used effectively. Students on GCE A level courses benefit greatly from the availability of a television satellite station.

33 The quality of students' written work is good. The work is marked and corrected clearly and teachers provide the students with helpful comments on how they may improve their work. The proportion of students who obtain grade C or above in GCSE French and Spanish has been consistently high. Pass rates in GCE A level Italian, Spanish and Portuguese have also been high. The pass rates in GCE A level Spanish are well above those predicted for the students on the basis of their achievements in GCSE examinations. However, retention rates in French and Spanish at GCE A level have declined over the past three years. In its self-assessment report, the college has acknowledged that GCE A level pass rates in German were poor in 1995 and 1996.

Examples of students' achievements in modern languages, 1995 to 1997

Course grouping		1995	1996	1997
GCE A level Spanish	Retention (%)	88	87	67
	Pass rate (%)	100	100	100
GCE A level Portuguese	Retention (%)	92	83	94
	Pass rate (%)	93	93	90
GCE A level Italian	Retention (%)	100	75	80
	Pass rate (%)	100	100	100
GCE A level French	Retention (%)	97	79	65
	Pass rate (%)	62	89	76
GCE A level German	Retention (%)	100	71	80
	Pass rate (%)	0	40	100
GCSE French	Retention (%)	89	74	85
	Pass rate (%)	63	69	91
GCSE Spanish	Retention (%)	67	83	80
	Pass rate (%)	88	78	100

Source: college data

Cross-college Provision

Support for Students

Grade 1

34 The college's judgements about the quality of the support it provides for students were comprehensive and they were based on sound evidence. The self-assessment report drew upon separate, equally good self-assessment reports for learning support and careers education. Inspectors concluded that students are provided with an exceptional range of services and enrichment activities which enhance their self-development.

Key strengths

- good pre-entry and enrolment information, advice and procedures
- the highly-supportive tutorial system
- the close monitoring of the attendance and individual progress of students
- the good provision of accredited additional studies and enrichment activities
- the effective careers education and guidance
- the good personal and welfare support for students
- the careful support for students with learning difficulties
- the good support for students with disabilities
- the range of activities which reflect the college's Catholic ethos

Weaknesses

- insufficient open access to the learning support facilities

35 There are well-established, thorough procedures for informing pupils and parents at the college's four partner schools about the college's provision and for introducing them to

the college. College staff are well briefed about interview and enrolment procedures.

Good-quality, clearly-written information about the college, its courses, the entry criteria, facilities and the Catholic ethos is available. These strengths are identified in the college's self-assessment report.

36 Inspectors agreed with the college in identifying its tutorial and pastoral system as a strength. Students said that they feel well supported. They have daily contact with their tutors in a 15-minute session which deals with registration and administrative issues and provides opportunities for discussion, reflection and prayer. Students receive further support through a weekly key skills session which covers study skills, careers education and information technology skills. Students' attendance is closely monitored using an electronic registration system. Parents are informed in cases where there is a cause for concern about students' attendance or behaviour. This procedure is generally effective.

37 There are good opportunities for students to develop study skills and plan for the future. They negotiate personal learning targets with their tutor and draw up action plans to achieve them. Progress towards meeting targets is monitored regularly and up-to-date records of achievement are maintained. The college makes use of a commercial system which predicts students' GCE A level achievements on the basis of their GCSE grades, as a means of encouraging them to improve their performance. In its self-assessment report, the college recognises the improvement in students' achievements at GCE A level. Parent evenings are held twice each year and give parents the opportunity to discuss the progress of their sons and daughters.

38 Students can further enrich their studies by choosing from an extensive programme of optional activities and their successful participation in these contributes to their overall record of achievement. Activities include

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drama, music and sport, as well as others reflecting the college's Catholic mission. Sports such as rugby, football and basketball are played by male and female students. There is a flourishing student council, made up of elected representatives, which organises social and fund-raising activities, and represents students' views within the college.

39 Students requiring support on personal matters can approach their tutor or other staff member, or the college chaplaincy. Tutors and chaplains refer students to a range of external agencies where further help is necessary. Students make extensive use of the various sources of formal and informal personal support which are available in the college. The college's hardship fund is carefully used, mainly to assist individual students with travel fares to college, and in meeting the cost of visits related to their studies.

40 There is effective careers education and guidance which is valued by the students. Students can drop in for advice from the college's qualified careers teacher in the well-resourced careers area. All students are entitled to a pre-arranged interview with a careers guidance officer from a local careers organisation. As a result of this interview, the students draw up individual action plans which are followed up in their key skills sessions.

41 Appropriately qualified staff provide learning support for students with learning difficulties and for speakers of other languages. The college has made considerable progress in improving the provision of learning support since the last inspection. All foundation level students have their literacy and numeracy skills tested when they join the college. Other students are referred for learning support by their teachers or they refer themselves for it. In order to ascertain the support needs of students with statements of special needs the college liaises with the partner schools where the students were previously studying. In discussion with the students, staff draw up

individual programmes of learning support for them. Staff keep good records of students' work and progress, and liaise closely with tutors and subject teachers. Some learning support is effectively integrated with students' main programmes of study. Students would like more time to work on their literacy and numeracy but at present they do not have access to the learning support facilities outside lesson times.

42 The college encourages applications from students with disabilities and currently there is a small number of students with severe disabilities on roll. These students are supported by care assistants. The students say they feel well supported and that they are enabled to play a full part in the life of the college.

43 The college satisfies the requirements of sections 44 and 45 of the *Further and Higher Education Act 1992* by making provision for collective acts of worship. As stated in its self-assessment report, the college provides many opportunities for students to practise and develop their Catholic faith. All students take part in a weekly assembly which invites reflection on a moral, social or theological theme and provides an opportunity for prayer. The college's Catholic mission is well supported by two full-time chaplains and their two assistants. They create a pleasant and welcoming chaplaincy which students value as a place where they can relax, meet friends and find support. The chaplains encourage initiatives from students and staff which relate to activities such as work for charities, help for developing countries overseas and the upholding of human rights. They organise retreats and celebrate mass, with the help of students and staff, in the college's chapel on a daily basis and on special occasions. Students of all faiths and beliefs are welcome in the chaplaincy and at services, and they participate in these. All students take part in the college's general religious education programme which they value for the opportunities it offers to discuss moral issues.

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General Resources

Grade 1

44 The judgements of inspectors were broadly the same as those expressed in the college's self-assessment report.

Key strengths

- high-quality, attractive accommodation
- good standards of maintenance and care of accommodation and equipment
- the well-situated and carefully-designed chapel
- the careful placing of thoughtfully-chosen religious artefacts
- high-quality and extensively-used library provision
- good specialist accommodation
- easily-accessible facilities for students with disabilities

Weaknesses

- insufficient learning support facilities for students to use on their own

45 The college occupies a small, attractive site. The college's accommodation comprises a modern, purpose-built building, and two refurbished former school buildings. The accommodation and college grounds are maintained to a high standard and students treat them with respect. During the college day, room usage is high, but students are always taught in accommodation which is suitable for the content and purpose of their lessons.

46 The attractive well-designed chapel is near the main entrance. It is a focal point for the college and provides an effective environment for reflection and prayer. Religious artefacts are well chosen and they help to sustain the spiritual ethos of the college. The centrally-placed stained glass window serves as a constant reminder of the college's Catholic identity.

47 The college recognises the value of the well-stocked and maintained library which has good facilities for careers education and for students to work together in groups. The library and its adjacent rooms are used extensively for private study, and become crowded at times of peak usage. The library accommodation and facilities have, however, been improved since the last inspection. Helpful information guides have been produced for students to enable them to use the Internet, CD-ROM databases and other facilities relevant to their studies. The librarian's membership of the strategic planning groups and curriculum review board enable her to contribute to management plans and keep the library abreast of curricular developments in the college.

48 Since the previous inspection, the social accommodation for students has been improved by the addition of two common rooms with coffee bars. There is a fully equipped gymnasium. Apart from this and some outdoor playing areas which are used for ball games, there are few other sports facilities on site. To compensate, the college has negotiated favourable terms for students to have access to local leisure centres and they use these extensively. In addition to the outdoor sports areas, the grounds contain attractive landscaped gardens and seating for the students and staff.

49 The college has won an award from the local authority for the accessibility of its buildings to wheelchair users. The two main buildings are fully accessible to people with restricted mobility and the third is accessible to them on the ground floor. Where necessary, the college reschedules lessons so classes are not held in a room which students with a physical disability cannot reach. The college is committed to enrolling students with disabilities and is currently meeting the cost of two care assistants. However, the college finds that it cannot fund further care assistants and may be unable to continue taking students with more complex physical disabilities.

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50 In the newly-developed area of learning support, there are not enough 'open access' facilities which students may use on their own, at any time. The self-assessment report acknowledges that learning resources need further development, especially for numeracy. Some computers are available in the learning support area but there is no software to enable students to improve their literacy and numeracy.

51 Information technology facilities overall have improved significantly since the last inspection. The college has upgraded its computing equipment and students and staff now have access to the Internet. There are some rooms throughout the college which give students access to computing facilities outside timetabled lessons.

52 Teaching and support staff have appropriate work areas and good facilities which enable them to carry out their work effectively. A room adjoining the staff room is equipped with a high-quality photocopier, and with a computer workstation and printer.

Quality Assurance

Grade 2

53 In its self-assessment report, the college identified the main strengths and weaknesses in its quality assurance procedures although inspectors concluded that some weaknesses were overlooked. Each curriculum team and most college services were involved in identifying their strengths and weaknesses, and in producing their own self-assessment reports which contributed to the college's first self-assessment report produced in 1996-97. These reports were subject to review and moderation within the college. An external consultant assisted the college in the process and verified aspects of the reports. The process was thorough and involved the governors and staff at all levels.

Key strengths

- a well-established system for the review and evaluation of curriculum areas
- the good use of targets and performance indicators in most areas of the college
- the clear guidelines and effective quality assurance procedures for vocational courses
- the careful procedures for the approval of new courses
- the evident commitment of staff to self-assessment and to the continuous improvement of the provision
- the actions taken to improve college services following the careful analysis of students' views of their effectiveness
- identification of staff development needs through the well-established staff appraisal system
- the practice of observing work in the classroom in order to support teachers and evaluate the overall quality of teaching

Weaknesses

- insufficient links between quality assurance and strategic planning
- the lack of a policy on quality assurance and of guidelines on the implementation of the quality assurance procedures
- slow development of targets by some college services

54 The college is committed to the continuous improvement of standards and to evaluation of its performance. All staff are responsible for quality assurance in their particular area. The long-established process for course review and evaluation has been refined to make effective use of targets and performance indicators. The self-assessment report recognises the strengths of the process. Curriculum reviews are overseen by the curriculum development board, a group which includes senior managers and all

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course leaders. When the reviews are complete they are subjected to close scrutiny by senior managers. Reasons for poor or exceptionally good performance are discussed with the relevant course leader and actions are agreed to improve weaknesses and share good practice. New courses are subject to a careful approval process.

55 The college acknowledges that there is further work to be done to develop formal links between quality assurance processes and strategic planning. Targets set for individual curriculum areas are not necessarily linked to targets for the college as a whole. A comprehensive handbook for staff teaching on vocational courses gives guidance on the operation of quality assurance systems. The college has produced a statement of practice about quality assurance measures used in the college. However, the college does not have a policy on, or guidelines for quality assurance to help staff to achieve consistency of practice in the implementation of the quality assurance system. The college identified the lack of such a policy and guidelines as a weakness in its self-assessment report. Governors are informed regularly about quality assurance issues in their meetings. The students' charter is clearly written and is included in the students' diary.

56 There is variation in the extent to which performance indicators are used and targets are set for college services. Service teams are required to assess their own performance and, in some cases, comprehensive evaluation systems are in place to assist them. For example, the library staff monitor all aspects of the use of the service and have monthly meetings to review progress against targets. The annual review of the use of journals has led to a reduction in costs. Students' views are gathered through questionnaires and they are used to support judgements on many aspects of the college's services. Self-assessment reports were produced for library services, the careers service and learning support, but not for other aspects of the college's services.

57 There is systematic observation of lessons throughout the college. This is identified in the self-assessment report as a significant strength. Lesson observation forms part of the self-assessments of curriculum areas and of staff appraisal. All teachers are observed at least once each term, either by their line manager or by one of their colleagues. Points noted during the lessons observed are carefully recorded on a standard form. Few of the observation forms seen by inspectors, however, identified weaknesses or areas for improvement. The findings of the observations are used effectively in the sharing of good practice and in the identification of staff development needs. The quality of teaching has improved significantly since the last inspection.

58 Staff training and development needs are identified through a well-established, carefully-conducted appraisal system for all staff. Most staff development needs are met. In the self-assessment report, the meeting of these needs and the comprehensive and effective induction which is provided for all new staff were identified as strengths and the inspectors agreed with this assessment. Staff development activities relate to strategic objectives and the personal development needs of staff. The college is committed to enabling its staff to progress within the college or outside it. The college has encouraged staff to study for assessor and verifier awards to support the expansion of vocational courses and more than 50 per cent of staff have so far received relevant awards. Each year there is a 'Catholic identity day' which enables staff to discuss how the Catholic ethos of the college might be further strengthened. This day is particularly appreciated by staff of other denominations or faiths who welcome the support of Catholic colleagues and the chaplaincy.

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Governance

Grade 2

59 The judgements of the inspectors concur with most of those expressed in the college's self-assessment report. However, some weaknesses identified during the inspection were not included in the report.

Key strengths

- generally effective procedures for carrying out the business of the governing body
- the extensive and productive contribution of the chairman of governors to the life of the college
- the governors' affirmation of the Roman Catholic character and mission of the college and the effective contribution by governors to strategic planning
- the monitoring by governors of the college's performance, particularly students' achievements
- satisfactory financial control
- effective governing body committees
- the relevant range of governors' experience and expertise
- the promotion by governors of equal opportunities

Weaknesses

- the proportion of foundation governors at some governing body meetings has been less than it should have been under the provisions of the instrument of government
- underdeveloped links between governors and staff in relation to the curriculum

60 The college's Roman Catholic ethos is at the centre of its mission and is at the heart of all its activities. The ethos of the college as a Catholic

community is based on the teachings and practices of the Catholic Church, as required by the instrument and articles of government, and the Catholic ethos is developed through the work of the college.

61 The college recognises that the quality of governance is a strength. Inspectors agreed that overall the college is well governed by committed governors, who have established good working procedures for conducting their business. Their contribution in maintaining and developing the Roman Catholic character and mission of the college is outstanding. The college benefits from the extensive contribution made by the chairman of governors. Since the previous inspection, the governing body has sought and appointed members with high levels of expertise in a range of appropriate professional areas. Efficient committees manage the governing body's responsibilities for finance and premises, remuneration, audit, and pay and personnel. Governors receive, through the finance committee, adequate financial information for them to maintain satisfactory financial control. However, links between governors and curriculum areas are underdeveloped.

62 The FEFC's audit service concludes that, within the scope of its assessment, the governance of the college is adequate. The governing body substantially conducts its business in accordance with the instrument and articles of government. It also substantially fulfils its responsibilities under the financial memorandum with the FEFC.

63 Meetings of the governing body are businesslike. Informative papers are circulated before meetings. However, the proportion of foundation governors at some meetings has been less than it should have been under the provisions of the instrument of government. Governors make an effective contribution to strategic planning. The college's performance against its strategic plan and annual operating statement is monitored regularly. There is

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particularly stringent monitoring of students' achievements. In the self-assessment report, governors identified as a weakness that there is no formal procedure for evaluating their own performance and they have recently begun to do this. Governors operate within an agreed code of conduct, and a register of their interests is maintained. Improvements have been made in response to the previous report of the FEFC's auditors.

64 Governors support the college's mission to provide comprehensive education. They place a strong emphasis on equal opportunities for all students, and focus particularly on foundation level students, and on students with disabilities. The college particularly wishes to enrol more students with disabilities. Governors are knowledgeable about the requirements of such students and are working to ensure that there are as few barriers as possible for those with the most severe disabilities.

Management

Grade 1

65 Inspectors' judgements of the strengths and weaknesses in management were in agreement with those contained in the college's self-assessment report.

Key strengths

- the maintenance and development of the Catholic identity of the college through authoritative management
- good management of resources
- the clear management structure and reporting lines
- effective communications with staff
- the effective use of accurate management information to inform planning and operations
- appropriate and effective liaison with external agencies

- the successful promotion of equality of opportunity

Weaknesses

- some overoptimistic targets
- some overlap in the roles of the policy and review, and strategic planning groups

66 The college is authoritatively managed, and managers place an emphasis on traditional values such as respect for others, self-discipline and honesty. The co-ordination and management of the curriculum have been improved since the previous inspection by the formation of a curriculum review board. The appointment of a director of vocational studies has contributed to the coherence and status of this area of the college's work. The strategic planning group, comprising the principal, the two vice-principals, the four divisional directors and four assistant directors and the librarian, meets twice termly to make major decisions, set targets and review progress. The policy and review group comprising the principal, the two vice-principals, and the four divisional directors meets weekly to co-ordinate and plan operational issues. There is some overlap in the roles of these two groups.

67 The management structure is appropriate and the lines of communication work well. Staff and other resources are effectively allocated, well managed and they are kept under review. Staff understand their own roles and responsibilities, and those of their colleagues. Relevant information and the decisions of managers and staff are disseminated through divisional and staff meetings, and through a weekly bulletin. Staff appreciate the opportunities they have to contribute to the decision-making processes.

68 The inspectors agreed with the college's judgement in its self-assessment report that through effective management, the Catholic

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identity of the college is maintained and developed. Staff are committed to, and enthusiastic in their support of, the college's mission to provide high-quality, comprehensive education within a Roman Catholic ethos. Equality of opportunity is promoted and effectively managed. The number of women in managerial positions has increased since the last inspection, and more staff from minority ethnic backgrounds are now employed in the college.

69 Management information is generally accurate. It is used to inform both planning and the operation of the college at all levels. The college recruits well and is improving retention rates and examination results in many areas. These successes are sometimes obscured by the setting of overoptimistic targets which the college has not achieved.

70 The college is aware of the significant increase in the number of students of other denominations or faiths, and is monitoring the impact of this on its Catholic identity. The competitive environment in which the college operates sometimes limits co-operative work with other schools. Relationships with the Archdiocese of Westminster are particularly strong. The college links effectively with colleges of higher education, the careers service, employers and an appropriate range of other external agencies.

71 The FEFC's audit service concludes that, within the scope of its review, the college's financial management is adequate. Monthly accounts are prepared for management. Neither the internal nor the external auditors have identified significant weaknesses in the college's systems of financial control. The college's estimated average level of funding for 1996-97 was £19.20 per unit, against a funded allocation of £21.83.

Conclusions

72 St Charles Catholic Sixth Form College produced a comprehensive, generally accurate self-assessment report. The college's judgements and grades were supported by evidence and, in most cases, were in line with those made by inspectors. The sources of evidence included the analysis of students' perceptions of their courses and the college's services, lesson observations by peers and line managers and a thorough review of students' achievements, retention and destinations. The report overstated some of the strengths, and a few weaknesses identified by inspectors were omitted. Plans for action to address weaknesses and build on strengths were included in the self-assessment report but these rarely identified a timescale or specified who was responsible for carrying out improvements. Inspectors found that the self-assessment report provided a useful basis for planning and carrying out the inspection.

73 Strengths and weaknesses identified during the inspection are listed under each section of this report. The main strengths and weaknesses are identified in the summary.

College Statistics

Student numbers by age (November 1997)

Age	%
Under 16	0
16-18 years	98
19-24 years	2
25+ years	0
Not known	0
Total	100

Source: college data

Student numbers by level of study (November 1997)

Level of study	%
Foundation	8
Intermediate	22
Advanced	70
Higher education	0
Leisure/recreation (non-schedule 2)	0
Total	100

Source: college data

Student numbers by mode of attendance and curriculum area (November 1997)

Programme area	Full time	Part time	Total provision %
Science	129	0	14
Engineering	9	0	1
Business	98	0	11
Hotel and catering	54	0	6
Health and community care	28	0	3
Art and design	133	0	15
Humanities	430	0	49
Basic education	5	0	1
Total	886	0	100

Source: college data

Staff expressed as full-time equivalents (November 1997)

	Perm- anent	Fixed term	Casual	Total
Direct learning contact	49	3	0	52
Supporting direct learning contact	9	2	0	11
Other support	11	1	0	12
Total	69	6	0	75

Source: college data, rounded to nearest full-time equivalent

College Statistics

Three-year Trends

Financial data

	1994-95	1995-96	1996-97
Income	£2,834,000	£2,951,000	£2,921,000
Average level of funding (ALF)			
Out-turn to 1995-96; funded 1996-97	£22.39	£20.11	£21.83
Payroll as a proportion of income	72%	74%	*
Achievement of funding target	103%	115%	*
Diversity of income	2%	4%	*
Operating surplus	£104,000	£57,000	*

Sources: Income – Council Circulars 96/29 (1994-95), 97/35 (1995-96), college (1996-97)

ALF – Performance Indicators 1995-96 (1994-95 and 1995-96), Funding Allocations 1996-97 (1996-97)

Payroll – Council Circulars 96/29 (1994-95), 97/35 (1995-96)

Achievement of funding target – Performance Indicators 1995-96 (1994-95 and 1995-96)

Diversity of income – Council Circulars 96/29 (1994-95), 97/35 (1995-96)

Operating surplus – Council Circular 96/29 (1994-95), 97/35 (1995-96)

*data not available

Performance data for students aged 16 to 18

Qualifications		1994-95	1995-96	1996-97
GCE A level	Number of candidates	199	184	238
	Average point score per entry	4.7	4.8	5.2
	Position in tables	top third	top third	top 10%
Advanced vocational	Number in final year	51	45	50
	Percentage achieving qualification	67%	44%	64%
	Position in tables	bottom third	bottom 10%	bottom third
Intermediate vocational	Number in final year	*	68	73
	Percentage achieving qualification	*	41%	82%
	Position in tables	*	bottom third	top third

Source: DfEE

*1994-95 intermediate vocational results not available

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