

Numbers staying on for A-levels nearly triples



AIMING HIGH Swindon Academy A-level students Lauren Reid, Chris Tewkesbury, Darryl Kemble, Jimmy Fozzard, Paul Covey, Sam Doherty and Ashleigh Bennett. The new academy has 85 sixth formers compared to 30 in its first year

Picture: STUART HARRISON Ref: 21444-27

ACADEMY CELEBRATES SIXTH FORM SUCCESS

SWINDON Academy has nearly tripled its number of A-level students in its second year.

The number of pupils remaining at the school in the sixth form has rose from 30 to 85.

The flagship academy, which is funded by Christian charity the United Learning Trust, aims to keep children in one school up to the age of 19.

The current sixth formers have stayed on instead of opting for college, while a handful have arrived from other schools.

One student even left a year ago

**by Sarah Hilley
Education reporter**

shilley@swindonadvertiser.co.uk

and came back, asking to do exams.

Head teacher Jan Shadick said: "It is about raising their aspirations. We have children here who are very talented but they don't realise it.

"But now they are beginning to think they can do it. To hear them talking about university is amazing for us.

"It is becoming normal to stay in education and do well. Currently

Year 11 pupils are asking to come back next year."

Vice-principal Rose Codling said: "Their parents are saying: 'No one has gone to university in our family before.'"

Three schools merged to create the academy last year - Headlands, Pinehurst Infant and Pinehurst Junior.

The pupils wear a different coloured uniform to indicate where they fit into the academy structure.

It is currently split into two sites in Headlands Grove and Beech Avenue while staff and pupils wait

for a new permanent building.

Ms Shadick said: "This school has been through a turbulent history. If children are told they are worthless they begin to believe it. We aim to increase their self-esteem and confidence."

There are 130 academies open in 62 local authorities around the country, with plans for at least 400.

Schools Secretary Ed Balls advocates academies as a way of reaching his goal that by 2011 all schools will have at least 30 per cent of pupils getting 5 A*-C at GCSEs, including English and maths.