



Office for Standards  
in Education

## **Inspection Report**

### **ALDWORTH SCIENCE COLLEGE**

Unique Reference Number: 116427

LEA: Hampshire

Inspection Dates: 22 – 24 June 2004

Reporting Inspector: Honoree Gordon HMI

Inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996, and was deemed section 12 (3) under the same act

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The inspection was a pilot of the new arrangements for inspection announced by Ofsted in its consultation paper of February 2004. It was carried out with the support and co-operation of the staff of Aldworth Science College and Hampshire local education authority.

The inspection was carried out by four of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an independent lay inspector.

### **Key for inspection grades:**

Grade 1	Very good
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Adequate
Grade 4	Not adequate

### **Description of the school**

Aldworth Science College is a mixed science specialist college, comprehensive school for pupils aged 11-16 situated on the western side of Basingstoke. There are 649 pupils on roll. This number has declined since the time of the last inspection. There have been significant changes to the school's catchment area and there are now more pupils with special educational needs (SEN), or difficulties related to social disadvantage, than previously. The school has faced considerable problems in recruiting and retaining staff. Around one quarter of pupils has special educational needs and the school has other pupils on its register for support. The number of pupils who have free school meals is broadly average, but this figure does not accurately reflect the level of deprivation. The attainment of most pupils on entry is below average.

The school's motto is 'opportunities for all'. Its stated aims are to promote an ethos of achievement and a culture of positive attitudes to education and to life, thereby enabling pupils to reach their academic potential and develop as citizens.

## **OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL**

The school makes satisfactory provision for the education of its pupils. There is an appropriate curriculum which has developed well to meet their changing needs. Most pupils make satisfactory progress, however some groups of pupils underachieve. The majority continues to further education. This is an inclusive school; equality and inclusion are core values that underpin every aspect of its work. The personal development of the pupils is good. They are well cared for and supported by all staff. Many pupils show very positive attitudes to school. The school works effectively with the small minority of pupils who, for various reasons, may be disaffected. The school is well led, with clear vision and priorities set for further development and improvement. The school plays an active part in its local community. It has developed a range of beneficial partnerships which enhance learning opportunities for its pupils. The school offers good value for money.

**Grade:3**

### **Improvement since the last inspection**

The last inspection identified that improvements were needed in standards throughout the school. Although standards at Key Stage 3 are still below national averages, they have improved overall with particular success in science and mathematics. GCSE results have also improved and in 2003 were close to the national average. Pupils make satisfactory progress at Key Stage 3 and good progress at Key Stage 4. Teaching in mathematics at Key Stage 3, which was judged to be 'less effective' in the last inspection, has improved. These improvements have been achieved against the context of the school admitting considerably more pupils with special educational needs than previously.

The headteacher and governing body have been significant forces in driving through improvements. The leadership team has extended the curriculum to better meet the needs of all learners, for example, by the addition of vocational courses. Recent staffing, recruitment and retention problems have, however, slowed the pace of improvement in some areas. There has been considerable progress on many of the issues identified in the last inspection report. Provision for religious education, however, remains unsatisfactory and tutorial time is still not used effectively by all staff.

**Grade: 3**

### **Capacity to improve**

Since the appointment of a new headteacher and changes in the leadership team, it is evident that the school now has good capacity to improve. This is a self-reviewing school that knows its strengths and weaknesses. Clarity of vision and closely focused priorities, understood by all staff, ensure there is a cohesive approach to school improvement.

**Grade: 2**

### **What the school should do to improve further:**

- improve standards across the school, in particular the proportion of pupils attaining at least five A\* - C passes at GCSE

- extend the range and consistent use of teaching strategies to motivate learners of a wide ability
- ensure all girls achieve as well as they can
- improve the provision for religious education.

## **ACHIEVEMENT AND STANDARDS**

The school's self-evaluation states that standards and progress overall are adequate and inspectors agree with this judgement. In national tests and assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 standards achieved by pupils in core subjects have been below the national average for the past two years. At GCSE, overall standards were below the national average in 2002, but reached it in 2003. Compared to similar schools nationally GCSE results are above average.

Pupils enter the school in Year 7 with below average standards and a significant proportion having low reading ages. Pupils make satisfactory progress at Key Stage 3 with able pupils making good progress in science. Pupils' progress is good at Key Stage 4. The proportion of pupils attaining five GCSEs at grade A\* - G has improved considerably over the past three years and is now well above the national average. However, the A\* - C rates vary, for example, pass rates in English, mathematics and the sciences have improved whereas performance in German and design technology have declined. GCSE art results in 2003 were excellent. Girls achieve lower standards than nationally at GCSE but when compared to their standards on entry most achieve satisfactorily. Some girls, however, are not doing as well as they should. The school is aware of this and is taking steps to improve it.

### **Grade:3**

## **PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT**

The school judges pupils' personal development to be good and inspectors agree with this. Attendance is below average, but has improved slightly over the past three years as a result of close monitoring by the school and a multi-agency approach to supporting pupils. The behaviour of pupils in class and around the school is generally good. The number excluded from school is high, but has significantly decreased in 2003-04.

Pupils are polite and friendly and form positive relationships with each other and with staff. They have pride in their school. Respect for others and opportunities for spiritual development are effectively developed. Pupils contribute well to their school and to the local community. Their opinions are sought and carefully considered through the school council. They have been instrumental in bringing about improvements, for example a school garden and a prefects' room have resulted from pupil suggestions.

Pupils are socially aware and regularly raise money for, or take part in, activities to support local and international charities. Young Enterprise, work experience and industry link days contribute positively to pupils' social awareness and attitudes to work. Pupils from a range of backgrounds, including some who are physically disabled, are learning to work together cooperatively and to take an active part in school life. Pupils' moral and social development are effectively furthered through the personal, health and social education programme. This,

together with a good range of activities, some extra curricular, extends and develops pupils' self-esteem, confidence and cultural awareness.

**Grade: 2**

## **QUALITY OF PROVISION**

The school's self-evaluation identified teaching as good. Inspection evidence indicated that, although there were good lessons, teaching was satisfactory overall. The most effective teaching demonstrated thorough preparation, good planning and clear learning objectives. For example, in an English lesson pupils imagined visual images to accompany a sound track played to them. They used language imaginatively to compose a sombre and tense visual set of pictures. In another lesson the whiteboard was used to good effect in a challenging question and answer format that encouraged enthusiastic class participation. In a geography lesson pupils used well prepared handouts and engaged in a range of activities to explore pollution in Japan. In a social and education lesson pupils worked purposefully exploring provision and facilities for the disabled in buildings. The teachers encouraged pupils to use their local knowledge and observations to engage in a purposeful and reflective discussion. Through teachers' expertise in class management and a diverse range of activities, pupils were engaged fully in their learning.

A small minority of lessons were inadequate. In these, teaching relied too heavily on a restricted range of strategies to manage behaviour and engage pupils. These lessons were also characterised by insufficient attention to meeting the full learning needs of all pupils.

Guidance and support are good and inspectors agree with the school's self-evaluation in this area. There is frequent and effective liaison between tutors and subject teachers to monitor student progress. This progress is effectively tracked and departmental assessments are used to inform strategies to raise standards. The inclusion and tutor teams have developed a successful multi-agency approach to supporting students and addressing their particular needs. There is an effective pupil-mentoring system where older pupils mentor younger ones with behavioural issues. Pupils value the tutor system and their regular contact with heads of year. There is very good careers support through the local Connexions partnership. Last year 73 per cent of students progressed to further education.

The care and welfare of pupils are very good. There is particularly good support for students who have social and behavioural difficulties and are at risk of exclusion. This is well co-ordinated by the inclusion team. The school has been successful in reducing pupil exclusions this year. The school meets all statutory obligations with regard to child protection. An extensive range of topics is covered in the personal, social and health education programme, including health and lifestyle issues. The school has achieved the national standard for healthy schools. Drugs and alcohol education and fire safety are amongst topics which assist pupils in making decisions about personal well-being and safety. Pupils report that the school has an effective policy for dealing with bullying.

The school provides good opportunities for pupils to learn through lessons, extra-curricular activities and the provision for personal development. The timetabling and setting arrangements have recently been changed to motivate middle ability pupils and to improve their progress. There is a good balance of academic and vocational subjects. Overall, the options available for pupils in Years 10 and 11 are flexible and well matched to pupils' needs. This was correctly identified in the school self-evaluation report. The school has developed an extensive range of activities outside lessons. These include sports, drama and music along with Young Enterprise and the European Youth Parliament. The college

facilities are well used in the evenings and weekends through an extensive programme of adult and community learning.

**Grade: 3**

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

The school has assessed its leadership and management as good. Inspectors agree with this judgement. The school benefits from strong leadership and clear educational direction. The leadership team, through its actions, has demonstrated a determined approach to improve the quality of the pupils' experience. Vision and values, priorities for improvement, and targets are clearly documented, shared with staff and promoted across the school. Governors hold the school and its management to account. They are actively involved and there are good links between individual governors and teaching staff.

An open and communicative management style results in high staff morale and an ethos of trust and collaboration. The school has a purposeful and consultative meeting structure and internal communications are good. Staff are very well-informed through team meetings, newsletters and briefings from the head teacher.

Managers and teachers make good use of data to monitor school performance and the progress made by individual pupils. Actions to bring about improvement are regularly scrutinised by senior managers with regular reporting on progress to governors. Progress in raising standards in some areas has been hindered as a result of acute difficulties in attracting and recruiting suitable staff. Senior staff and governors have begun to successfully tackle this problem. Their innovative solutions are providing improved continuity of learning for many pupils and are beginning to have a positive impact on standards. The recent improvement in standards at Key Stage 4 is testament to this. Links between the school planning cycle, performance management systems and departmental development plans are well-embedded and complementary. Staff development including arrangements for the induction of staff, are very good and there is a highly supportive mentoring system for new teachers.

The principles, promotion and practice of equal opportunities are central to the college's mission. Pupils with physical disabilities play a full and active part in school life. In a minority of lessons, however, teachers do not always use a sufficient range of teaching methods to meet the individual needs of all pupils.

The school provides a welcome and harmonious learning environment. School buildings are generally clean and tidy and good use is made of pupils' work to create attractive displays. The school now has a full complement of teachers who are well matched to the curriculum. The standard of accommodation is adequate. Some improvements have been made to communal areas and there are good science laboratories.

The school is not meeting the statutory requirement for a daily act of collective worship. Provision for religious education is inadequate. The school has taken appropriate action through plans to integrate the teaching of religious education through humanities from September 2004.

**Grade: 2**

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