



**Office for Standards
in Education**

Inspection report
St Aloysius' RC College

Islington Education Authority

Dates of inspection: 13 and 14 October 2004

This inspection was carried out under section 3 of the School Inspections Act 1996 and was deemed a section 10 inspection under the same Act

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Basic information about the school

Name of school:	St Aloysius' RC College
Type of school:	Comprehensive for Boys
Status:	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils:	11 to 18 years
Headteacher:	Mr T Mannion
Address of school:	Hornsey Lane Highgate London N6 5LY
Telephone:	0207 263 1391
Name and address of appropriate authority:	The interim executive board at the above address
Chair of the interim executive board:	Sir Michael Wilshaw
Local education authority area:	Islington
Unique reference number:	100459
Name of reporting inspector:	Mr D Jones HMI
Dates of inspection:	13 and 14 October 2004

Introduction

1. St Aloysius' RC College is situated in Highgate. The college provides secondary education under the guidance of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Westminster and draws its pupils from an ethnically diverse area of north London. It has 866 pupils on roll, which is below the average size for a secondary school. Most pupils come from the London Borough of Islington, which has higher levels of social and economic disadvantage than those found nationally. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals, 34.9 per cent, is above average. Nearly 71 per cent of the pupils are of an ethnic heritage other than White British, the largest group being from a Black African background. Some 40 per cent of the pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is above average at 18.4 per cent, and 32 pupils have a Statement of Special Educational Needs.

2. The college was inspected in January 2003. The inspection was critical of many aspects of the work of the college and the college was made subject to special measures because it was failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education.

3. The governors drew up an action plan to address the key issues from the inspection of January 2003. The college was visited by Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools (HMI) on five occasions to monitor the progress being made.

4. In October 2004, three HMI inspected the college, assessing the standard of education provided and the progress the college has made, in particular in relation to the main findings and key issues in the inspection report of January 2003.

Main findings

5. In accordance with section 14 of the School Inspections Act 1996, I am of the opinion that the college no longer requires special measures, since it is now providing an acceptable standard of education for its pupils. The main findings of the inspection are:

- standards are rising, as reflected in a range of indicators. In 2004 there was a significant rise in the proportion of the pupils achieving five or more grades A* to C in the GCSE/GNVQ equivalent examinations. The percentage of pupils achieving five or more passes improved; only two pupils failed to achieve any GCSE or GNVQ passes. The number of A* and A grades achieved improved by nearly 60 per cent compared with the corresponding figure for 2003;
- the results of the 2004 national tests taken at the end of Key Stage 3 showed the proportion of the pupils achieving the expected Level 5 was broadly similar to the percentages in 2003; however there was a noticeable improvement in mathematics;
- overall standards in English are below those expected for the pupils' ages. An improving trend in GCSE results, particularly for those pupils achieving the

higher A* and A grades, indicates that standards are rising. Speaking and listening skills are at least satisfactory and often good;

- standards in mathematics have improved. The uncorroborated results of the pupils' performance at GCSE and in the national tests for pupils in Year 9, are likely to be in line with or above both the national figures and those for schools where the pupils' prior attainment was similar;
- the attitudes and behaviour of pupils were good; they were at least satisfactory or better in 42 out of 44 lessons and good in 29. The behaviour of pupils around the school was good;
- attendance is good, and at 94 per cent is above the national figure for secondary schools. The college has effective policies and procedures to monitor attendance. The number of authorised absences has declined. Punctuality is at least satisfactory and the college is seeking further improvement;
- the provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The code of conduct contributes to the pupils' understanding of right and wrong and brings consistency to the expectations of what is meant by good behaviour. A number of opportunities are provided for pupils to take responsibility. The strong Catholic ethos of the college permeates every aspect of daily life and serves to create a caring community spirit;
- the quality of teaching is satisfactory overall and includes a growing proportion that is good or better. Teaching was satisfactory in Key Stage 3 and good in Key Stage 4. The quality of teaching was at least satisfactory in 42 of the 44 lessons and good or better in 23;
- the curriculum provided by the college is unsatisfactory. Provision for design and technology is inadequate and does not meet the statutory requirements to teach food technology. The provision for citizenship is unsatisfactory. The provision for vocational education requires further development;
- the use of assessment to guide lesson planning and to ensure that work is matched to the pupils' abilities has improved, but remains unsatisfactory overall;
- the provision for the pupils who have special educational needs is satisfactory overall; weaknesses remain in mixed-ability classes where sometimes the teacher's planning makes insufficient provision for the needs of the individual. Lower achieving boys have made significant progress in literacy and numeracy through the support of the DfES/ Arsenal Double Club initiative;
- provision for pupils whose mother tongue is not English is improving but remains unsatisfactory. The college has recently appointed a full-time co-ordinator for English as an additional language;
- the leadership of the headteacher is very good. He has inspired both the pupils and staff to secure improvements in standards and behaviour. The

management of the college is good; a committed and industrious group of senior managers support the headteacher. Weaknesses remain in the strategic areas of curriculum and assessment;

- the interim executive board (IEB) has helped to re-establish the effective management of the college. A shadow governing body has been appointed and will assume responsibility for the college when the IEB has fulfilled its obligations under the terms of reference as set out by statute;
- the contractor, Cambridge Educational Associates which is responsible for support services on behalf of the local education authority (LEA), has provided good support for the work of the college.

Key issues

6. In order to improve the pupils' quality of education further, the IEB, headteacher, senior managers and staff need to:

- further develop teaching in the college so that it is more often challenging and inspiring in order to maintain the improvement in standards;
- improve the marking and assessment system and the way in which data is used to inform planning;
- ensure that the curriculum meets statutory requirements and that the provision for vocational education is enhanced.

Inspection findings

Standards achieved by the pupils

7. Pupils enter the college with standards of attainment that are below average. Although most pupils achieved or exceeded the expected Level 4 in the statutory tests at the end of their primary education in English, mathematics and science, the overall attainment of the cohorts entering the college has been below national trends for the last four years.

8. Standards are rising, as reflected in a range of indicators. In 2004, there was a significant rise, from 29 to 49 per cent, in the proportion of the pupils achieving five or more grades A* to C in the GCSE examinations. The percentage of pupils achieving five or more passes improved to 88 per cent, a rise of 17 percentage points on the previous year. Only two pupils failed to achieve any GCSE or GNVQ passes; 99.6 per cent of the cohort obtained one GCSE or GNVQ equivalent pass. The number of A* and A grades in 2004 improved by nearly 60 per cent compared with the corresponding figure in 2003. The higher achieving pupils produced good performances in English, mathematics, history, drama, French, art, music, and physical education. The overall results in the GCSE examinations, however, conceal variations between the pupils' performances in different subjects.

9. The uncorroborated results of the 2004 Key Stage 3 statutory tests were broadly similar to those achieved in 2003. The percentage of the pupils achieving the expected

Level 5 in English declined by three percentage points while those in science declined by one percentage point, to 60 and 59 per cent respectively. However, there was a marked improvement in mathematics, where the proportion of the pupils achieving Level 5 improved by eight percentage points to 69 per cent. These results are likely to be below the national figures in English and science, but close to the national average in mathematics. The results in English are likely to be in line with the results of schools where the pupils had similar prior attainment; however, the results in science are likely to be below such similar schools. In mathematics the results are likely to be above such comparators. Nearly one third of the pupils made above-average progress during Key Stage 3. More than half the pupils made above-average progress in mathematics by the end of Year 9.

10. Overall standards in English are below those expected for the pupils' ages. An improving trend in GCSE results, particularly for those pupils achieving the higher A* and A grades, indicates that standards are rising. Speaking and listening skills are at least satisfactory and often good. The pupils use sophisticated language and adapt their speech confidently to various contexts. Pupils listen sensitively to each other's opinions and work cooperatively when sharing ideas in pairs or small groups. However, whilst the majority of pupils are able to analyse and interpret information orally, they struggle to express and develop their thoughts in writing. The recognition of guided writing as a priority within the literacy strategy and across the curriculum has yet to have an impact on standards. Too many pupils leave work unfinished or marred by basic errors and poor handwriting skills. The pupils recognise and manipulate parts of speech; this has been used to good effect in the teaching of poetry in Year 7. Standards of reading across the college are generally good. Pupils in all year groups are keen to read aloud, often tackling quite difficult texts with expression and confidence.

11. Standards in mathematics have improved significantly. The department is justifiably pleased with the number of pupils who gained the higher levels in the 2004 Key Stage 3 tests. In a Year 9 lesson, the higher attaining pupils were working at levels above national expectations when constructing graphical representations of a formula. The pupils' understanding of algebra and mathematical relationships is developing in all year groups. The mathematics department is working hard to improve the pupils' investigative and problem-solving skills and now consistently requires the pupils to explain the mathematical reasoning that underpins the techniques they use. In a lower set Year 10 lesson, well-judged questions helped pupils to recognise corresponding and alternate angles: careful prompting, by the teacher, helped the boys to develop the correct use of terminology to support their accurate calculations. The promotion of numeracy across the curriculum is inconsistent. There is evidence of the development of mathematical skills in information and communication technology (ICT), science and physical education.

12. In science, the pupils in Key Stage 3 study a wide range of topics. Lessons provide appropriate opportunities for the pupils to explore scientific phenomenon through clearly presented demonstrations. However, the pupils' skills of scientific enquiry require further development. The introduction of a GNVQ course in applied science has been successful, with the pupils' performance in the most recent national examinations exceeding their average performance in other subjects.

13. The pupils' learning and progress were satisfactory or better in 40 of the 44 lessons. It was good or better in 18 lessons, including one drama lesson in which it was very good. Although learning was satisfactory overall in both key stages, the proportion of learning that

was good or better was lower than the equivalent figure for teaching. This is because teachers' planning does not always effectively address the needs of the variety of learners in each class; this occurs, for example, where a single densely typed worksheet is used for all pupils in a mixed-ability class. Lower achieving boys have made significant progress in literacy and numeracy through the support of the DfES/Arsenal Double Club initiative.

The pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

14. The attitudes and behaviour of pupils were at least satisfactory in 42 out of 44 lessons, and good in 29. The behaviour of boys around the college is good. A strong staff presence ensures that they move sensibly around the building, in corridors which are narrow and are often congested. The quality of teaching has a direct impact on pupils' behaviour. Where teaching is good the pupils are enthusiastic, responsive and work cooperatively; where teaching is uninspiring, disengagement and social chatter occur. Pupils were eager to engage in conversation with the inspection team, sharing information about their work, their pride in the college and its improvement. A positive learning ethos permeates the school. Relationships between the pupils and between adults and pupils are good.

15. There are rigorous systems to monitor the behaviour of specific pupils. Good use is made of the learning support centre as a 'time out' base to support the learning and emotional needs of these pupils. The introduction of weekly conferences with outside agencies, to discuss and allocate support to individual pupils, has contributed to the reduction in fixed-term and permanent exclusions. The Metropolitan Police initiative to base uniformed officers in London secondary schools, for part of the school week, has been well received by the pupils and the staff.

16. Attendance is good, and at 94 per cent is above the national figure for secondary schools. The school has effective policies and procedures to monitor attendance. The number of authorised absences has declined and is below the national figure. An education welfare officer supports the school in following up unauthorised or long-term absence. Punctuality is at least satisfactory and the school is seeking further improvement. In many instances lateness is a result of problems with public transport.

17. The provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The code of conduct contributes to the pupils' understanding of right and wrong and brings consistency to the expectations of what is meant by good behaviour. A number of opportunities are provided for the pupils to take responsibility within the college; for example, prefects from Year 11 operated independently and escorted prospective parents with young children around the school during this inspection. The parents were complimentary about the boys' performance. The school council consists of form representatives who bring forward suggestions for improvements to the college. Out-of-hours clubs and revision activities are well supported. The system of peer mentoring, where Year 11 pupils act as 'buddies' and role models to support younger pupils, has also contributed to raising self-esteem and has re-engaged those pupils at risk of becoming disaffected. The school was chosen by Arsenal Football Club to accompany them to a national conference aimed at combating racism in sport.

18. Daily prayer, combined with a period of reflection in tutor-time, underpins the provision for the pupils' spiritual development. The temporary chaplain often supports the weekly year group assemblies. The strong Catholic ethos of the college permeates every

aspect of daily life and serves to create a caring community spirit. The school complies with the statutory requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship.

19. Good opportunities are provided for the pupils to appreciate the diverse cultural traditions of the college community; for example, in English where poetry was used to compare the life of an Asian mother with that of her British counterpart. The pupils are given good opportunities to appreciate British cultural traditions through history, drama and music. There is a wide range of extracurricular activities which includes opportunities to travel abroad and to visit places in the United Kingdom such as Walsingham Abbey and Malham Tarn, Yorkshire.

The quality of education

20. The quality of teaching has improved considerably since the inspection of 2003, when nearly a quarter of the lessons were unsatisfactory or poor. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall and includes a growing proportion that is good or better; it was satisfactory in Key Stage 3 and good in Key Stage 4. Teaching was at least satisfactory in 42 of the 44 lessons and good or better in 23, including 4 in which it was very good and one in which it was excellent. Very good or excellent teaching was observed in physical education, religious education, science, mathematics and drama. Nearly two thirds of the teaching in the core subjects was good.

21. The teaching that was good or very good included a number of characteristic strengths: a wide variety of activities that added interest and enjoyment to the lesson; very good subject knowledge, conveyed expertly to the pupils; a tight lesson structure with a challenging pace; effective use of oral questions and answers to make use of prior learning or to deepen understanding; firm and purposeful management of the pupils; good development of subject vocabulary that included an insistence on the use of new words in full sentences; and a clear focus on how the pupils could improve their standards, for example by encouraging pupils to assess each other's work.

22. In those lessons where teaching was unsatisfactory and in some of the lessons that were satisfactory overall, there were also a number of common weaknesses. These included: lengthy periods of the lesson without variation in the work; insecure or inadequate teacher knowledge of the material; too much dominance of discussion by the teacher; marking that did not help to inform pupils' progress; and planning and resources which ignored the needs of different groups of pupils.

23. The use of assessment to guide lesson planning and to ensure that work was matched to the pupils' abilities was unsatisfactory overall. Some of the teachers explained clearly what pupils needed to do to achieve an improved level or grade; for example, in a Year 10 history lesson, the teacher clearly explained how answers might match examination grade criteria. In a Year 11 drama lesson pupils were expected to evaluate each other's work against examination requirements. Similar effective strategies were noted in English, physical education, mathematics and religious education. However, this good and very good practice was the work of individual teachers. Although some subjects have displays about National Curriculum levels and also sheets pasted into books, these are rarely referred to in lessons when setting work or describing objectives.

24. The school has its own assessment system which is used by most teachers; it is not related to national curriculum levels in Key Stage 3 and consequently is not helping most

pupils to form a secure understanding of their own progress. An extensive assessment database has been developed; however, its interrogation by staff is time-consuming and unwieldy. Teachers made too little use of attainment and assessment information to set short-term targets for the pupils; nonetheless, the school has taken steps to acquire new technology to help staff monitor pupils' progress. Too few pupils understood what they were expected to achieve and their understanding was not routinely checked as the lesson progressed.

25. Marking is completed regularly by most teachers and brief comments are usually given. However many comments are very general, for example referring to the presentation of the work, and do not help pupils to make progress in the development of skills specific to the subject. Informative comments were evident in some of the marking in English, science, mathematics and history. At present too many teachers do not make a connection between the setting of lesson objectives, criteria by which progress may be judged, and the marking of work.

26. The school's use of homework is barely satisfactory overall. A recent survey of Key Stage 3 pupils showed that most pupils in these years received less than an hour's homework per night. An examination of pupils' planners showed that many had regular days when no homework had been set. Although a number of teachers made effective use of homework because they had planned distinctive tasks for this purpose, some teachers used homework to finish off work that had been started in class and made no provision for the needs of different groups of pupils.

27. The provision for pupils who have special educational needs is satisfactory overall. However, it remains weak in mixed-ability classes where the teacher's planning has made insufficient provision for the needs of individuals and fails to specify the role of learning support assistants. The quality of information available to teachers is generally good and all have useful summaries of guidance about the pupils with special educational needs in their class. The learning support unit is effective and a wide range of pupils make appropriate and often good progress whilst working in this well-managed environment.

28. The provision for pupils whose mother tongue is not English is improving rapidly but remains unsatisfactory. Planning for the needs of pupils whose first language is not English is satisfactory in mathematics and English, but it is generally unsatisfactory elsewhere. The college has recently appointed a full-time co-ordinator for English as an additional language, and has also made a recent part-time appointment. Planning for the needs of pupils whose first language is not English is satisfactory in mathematics and English, but it is generally unsatisfactory elsewhere. Pupils who are just beginning to be confident in English are routinely given the additional task of translating work into their own language for pupils who are just beginning to speak English.

29. The quality of accommodation and resources is sound. The school does not possess the specialist facilities to comply with the statutory requirements for food technology. The school does not have the level of ICT facilities found in most secondary schools.

30. The curriculum provided by the college is unsatisfactory. Provision for design and technology is inadequate in all years; the allocation of time for this subject in Key Stage 3 is much lower than the national average whilst only one in eight pupils is taking a technology course in Year 10 and Year 11. Design and technology does not meet the requirements of the National Curriculum as there is no provision for food technology. The college has allocated

accommodation to rectify this situation. A GCSE citizenship course has been introduced in Year 10 and is developing appropriately; however, the provision of the statutory requirements for citizenship is unsatisfactory; it is not a cohesive experience for all pupils.

31. Provision for vocational education requires further development. The range of vocational and work-related opportunities available to lower attaining boys is unsatisfactory. The school has begun to introduce vocational courses in Key Stage 4 and successful GNVQ courses have been developed in business education and applied science. A link with a college of further education has provided an additional range of activities for older pupils. However, the vocational provision available for the majority of boys in Years 10 and 11 is limited and does not provide a sufficiently flexible range of curriculum opportunities.

Leadership and management

32. The leadership of the headteacher is very good; he has inspired both pupils and staff to bring about improvement. The management of the school is good. The headteacher provides firm and articulate guidance, and a clear direction for the work of the school. A committed and industrious group of senior managers support the headteacher. School policies are coherent statements to teachers on agreed practices. Weaknesses remain in strategic areas such as curriculum and assessment; although significant improvement has been achieved in these areas, further analyses and reform are required.

33. At the time of the inspection in January 2003, the management systems were insufficiently robust and there were inconsistencies across the college, as a result of a lack of rigour in implementing agreed practices. The present headteacher took up post in an acting capacity in January 2004, following a period of considerable instability. Using his experience as a headteacher he has inspired pupils and staff to secure the improvements required. An appropriate management structure is in place; one deputy headteacher and three assistant headteachers are responsible for the line-management of subject and year teams. Roles and responsibilities are clear; lines of accountability are understood and work well in practice.

34. Subject managers continue to demonstrate variable levels of effectiveness in their leadership and monitoring skills. It has been difficult to recruit subject leaders for some departments; for example, geography and religious education. Some heads of department have developed their management skills and provide effective leadership. The monitoring of most aspects of the work of the college is thorough and extensive. Members of the senior management team observe lessons and give detailed feedback. Heads of department are required to monitor homework, lesson-planning, marking and assessment.

35. The college found it difficult to recruit teachers to some subject areas although the proportion of temporary or supply teachers has declined considerably. Nonetheless, the staff have responded well to the headteacher's leadership and have undertaken considerable additional work in order to improve the quality of their planning and teaching. Many have enhanced their contribution to the supervision of this complex site. The whole staff have evolved into a strong team of committed professionals. The school has become a positive learning environment.

36. Forty non-teaching and support staff have played their part in the improvements to the college; they all provide a valuable service in support of the pupils. The college ethos of commitment and care is demonstrated in the initial greeting of visitors, the guidance offered to parents and pupils and, not least, in the cleanliness of the site.

37. The IEB has helped to re-establish the effective management of the college. Composed of representatives of the diocesan education board, senior personnel working on behalf of the LEA and two serving headteachers, the members spend a significant proportion of their time in support of the college. A shadow governing body has been appointed and will assume responsibility for the college when the IEB has fulfilled its obligations, under the terms of reference as set out by statute.

38. The contractor, Cambridge Educational Associates, which is responsible for support services on behalf of the LEA, has provided good support for the work of the college. A strategy review recently submitted to the college provides an outline for continued support.

Implementation of the action plan

39. The inspection report of January 2003 required the college to address three key issues. These were principally related to: improving governance and leadership; improving teaching and learning; and raising standards. Overall, good progress has been made in these areas. There has been well-targeted support and guidance for teaching. The appointment of an experienced headteacher has secured the improvements in standards, leadership and behaviour sought in the report. The appointment of an IEB has secured the governance of the college.

Appendix – Information about the inspection

The college was inspected by HMI in January 2003, under section 3 of the School Inspections Act 1996, which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools the authority to cause any school to be inspected. The inspection was critical of many aspects of the work of the school and, in accordance with that Act, the college was made subject to special measures because it was failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education.

The college was visited by HMI in June and November of 2003, and in February and June 2004 to assess the progress it was making to implement its action plan and address the key issues in the inspection report of January 2003.

In October 2004, three HMI returned to inspect the college for two days. The inspection was carried out under section 3 of the School Inspections Act 1996; it was also deemed a section 10 inspection under the same Act.

Forty four lessons or parts of lessons, one assembly and three registration sessions were inspected. The pupils were observed at break and lunchtimes and samples of their work were inspected. Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior staff, representatives of the IEB and other nominated staff. Informal discussions were held with other staff and pupils. A wide range of the school's documentation was scrutinised. Account was also taken of the evidence from previous monitoring inspections.

The inspection assessed the quality of education provided and the progress the college has made, in particular in relation to the main findings and key issues in the inspection report of January 2003 and the action plan prepared by the governing body to address those key issues.