



St Aloysius RC College

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 100459
Local Authority Islington
Inspection number 285803
Inspection dates 7–8 November 2006
Reporting inspector Barry Jones

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Comprehensive	School address	Hornsey Lane
School category	Voluntary aided		Highgate
Age range of pupils	11–16		London N6 5LY
Gender of pupils	Boys	Telephone number	02072631391
Number on roll (school)	890	Fax number	02072635963
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr John Malynn
		Headteacher	Mr Tom Mannion
Date of previous school inspection	27 January 2003		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by four Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The college serves a very disadvantaged, inner-city community. The proportions of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and who do not speak English as their home language are much higher than in the great majority of colleges. Pupils' attainment on entry varies but is usually below average. The college is part of the extended college initiative. The college was placed into special measures in January 2003. Subsequently, it experienced recruitment and retention difficulties. The governing body was disbanded in summer 2003 and an interim executive board established to govern the college. A new governing body was established in June 2005. The college was led by an acting headteacher for a period before the current substantive headteacher was appointed as acting headteacher in January 2004 and the appointment confirmed in September 2004. The school was removed from special measure in 2004.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

St Aloysius has emerged from a turbulent period and is now a good college. Standards are now rising faster than the national trend. This successful transition owes much to a dedicated core of teachers who are passionate about the college. The headteacher has been instrumental in galvanising and marshalling their enthusiasm, by raising their expectations as to what pupils might achieve and consequently increasing the morale of the whole staff. Through his excellent leadership, the staff have united, there is a common sense of purpose and a strong determination to do the very best for the boys at St Aloysius. The strong Catholic ethos of the college has served it well in difficult times and the boys' spiritual development is outstanding. The college has also prospered because it has fostered excellent partnerships across the complete spectrum of its work. Latterly, the governors have also played an important strategic role and successfully hold the college to account. The college's reputation was severely dented by the imposition of special measures but now pride has been restored. Parents and pupils are overwhelmingly positive about the college. As one pupil said, 'The headteacher is great and he has made the college a better learning environment.'

The fluctuating fortunes of the college have been reflected in the varying quality of the intake to Year 7. The boys in Year 11 in 2006 entered the college with attainment that was below average but achieved results at GCSE level that were close to national averages. Consequently, given the starting points achievement is good. The results are also rising rapidly at Key Stage 3 and the college achieved its best ever results in 2006 and the highest in the borough. The rise in standards is linked to improvements in teaching which is now good. Staffing has stabilised and the college has been able to overcome its former dependence on supply and temporary staff. This stems from the positive ethos and sense of involvement in an exciting venture promoted by the headteacher - staff now want to stay at the college. It has been complemented by a rigorous monitoring of teaching quality. Consequently, teachers are supported well in developing their own teaching. The college now has a significant number of newly qualified teachers. The induction programme for them is outstanding and is laying good foundations for the college to improve further.

Boys' personal development and well-being are good. Their behaviour has improved significantly and is now good. As one parent wrote, 'The college has improved over the past years, particularly the boys' behaviour.' This is contributing to the good learning environments in classrooms and helps pupils to make good progress. Staff and prefects' vigilance in the congested, narrow corridors and outside the college also contributes well to the orderly community. This growing mutual respect between pupils and with adults means that boys can take on extra responsibilities. They are responding well to these opportunities and make an outstanding contribution to the community. Boys with learning difficulties and disabilities make the same progress as their peers through the very good support they receive. Pupils who do not have English as their home language also receive good support. Consequently, they make good progress, not only in acquiring language skills, but also in their other subjects. The college works very well with other agencies to ensure that the quality of care for pupils is good

The college has made excellent progress since being placed in special measures in 2003. It has made further good progress since its last inspection in 2004 which noted residual weaknesses in teaching, assessment procedures and in the curriculum. The quality of teaching has improved significantly and self-evaluation is good. The use of assessment and the curriculum in Key Stage 4 remain areas for development. Both aspects are being tackled and are now satisfactory. The college has not been able to proceed as quickly as it would have wished because of previous staffing difficulties. These are now resolved but there is still varying practice between teachers and departments in the effective use of assessment. New courses have been introduced into Year 10 this year which improve the range of pathways available to boys. Leadership and management are good and, given its track record in the last three years, the college has a good capacity to improve.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that all teachers and departments make effective use of assessment data to monitor the progress made by pupils and to plan work for pupils.
- Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the new curriculum in Key Stage 4 and share the good practice.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards are broadly average. They have been generally below average at Key Stage 3 but the gap with national averages is being closed rapidly each year because results are improving faster than the national rate. Provisional results for 2006 indicate standards are now in line with the national average. At GCSE level, the proportion of pupils attaining five or more higher grades is in line with the national average. It is a little below average when English and mathematics are included amongst the five subjects. This is because in previous years pupils' progress in these subjects was only satisfactory. However, provisional results for 2006 show that boys are making good progress in these subjects too, albeit still slightly behind the overall average rate of progress for the whole college. This is due to the improvements in the quality of the teaching and better use of data. Both departments have been consistently well led. The improvement in standards is reflected by the fact that the college missed most of its targets in 2003 but now meets challenging targets. There are no underachieving groups although Black African boys tend to do relatively well and Black Caribbean boys achieve satisfactorily.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Boys' excellent spiritual development is exemplified by their ability to reflect on the link between their spiritual guidance and their daily actions and to empathise with others. It also underpins their outstanding contribution to the college and the local community. They willingly take on a wide range of responsibilities including mentoring

younger boys, acting as prefects and participating in citizenship projects. They value the experience of helping to look after very young children through the 'teens and toddlers' project. Boys value the opportunities to develop leadership skills. For instance, the college council is effective and has contributed to developing a healthier college. Their understanding of healthy living issues is good. In practice, they are actively engaged in physical activities but rather less choose the healthy-eating option. They enjoy college and the good relationships reflect this. One boy said, 'I feel more grown up because I have to make decisions and get on with everyone.' They attend well but too many are late for college despite strong efforts by the college.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are predominately good. Teachers have good subject knowledge, have effective questioning techniques, make good use of resources and use teaching assistants well to support pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities. They manage behaviour well and boys attribute their own good progress to the challenging teaching and the calm, working environment. In an outstanding English lesson, Year 11 boys worked in groups and discussed stereotypes depicted in a recent film. Their understanding and ability to express their ideas was helped considerably by the teacher's enthusiastic, wide-ranging knowledge, probing questions and high expectations for what the boys could achieve. Although most teachers use a wide range of learning strategies, small classrooms sometimes inhibit the use of discussion groups and practical work. This is being addressed through plans for a new building. Marking is good following a concerted whole-college drive to improve the quality. Teachers make constructive comments that help pupils to improve further. The use of assessment to plan work is satisfactory and improving. It is good in English and the college is at the stage where good practice is now being shared between departments.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good in Key Stage 3 and satisfactory in Key Stage 4. It is further enhanced by a rich range of extra-curricular activities and opportunities for study outside normal college times. For instance, the college has responded to boys' requests for new subjects by providing Saturday morning classes in law, psychology and classical studies. This is very innovative and their value is shown by the good attendance. The quality of the curriculum overall is therefore good. These initiatives are well supported by local organisations. For instance, there is mentoring by a large city law firm, boys attend a local further education college to take vocational subjects such as construction and Arsenal football club help to fund a literacy teacher. Provision for personal and social development is good and contributes to the boys' good social, moral and cultural understanding. Boys speak enthusiastically about the new 'sports education model'

initiative which they say strongly motivates them to improve their physical skills while also developing their thinking and leadership and management skills.

The college has introduced new vocational courses into Year 10 in this academic year. For instance, all Year 10 pupils are following an applied information communication and technology (ICT) course. This is well received by the boys but puts extra demands on the use of ICT resources and staffing. The new dual pathway approach has started well in Year 10 but it is too early to judge whether it is raising boys' achievement.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good and are enhanced by excellent partnership working with other agencies. This includes meeting the needs of those boys who have behavioural problems and those who are at an early stage of learning English. The organisation of the support for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is excellent and means that these boys make good progress and can play a full part in the life of the college. It is also indicative of the high priority afforded by the college to making sure that every boy is included. One grateful parent whose son had received support wrote, 'My son is now predicted higher GCSE grades than we had ever expected when he entered Year 7...thank-you.'. There are few incidences of bullying or racial abuse and there are effective procedures for dealing with any infrequent incidents. Boys know there is an adult to whom they can turn if they have a problem. Consequently, they feel safe.

Aspects of guidance are good. All Year 10 boys have work placements for two weeks and receive a useful visit from staff. In Year 11, they receive help in writing curricula vitae and have mock interviews with employers in a 'presenting yourself' day. Careers guidance in cooperation with the Connexions service is good. Hence, together with the good progress they make in acquiring literacy, numeracy and ICT skills, boys are well prepared for the next stage in their life. Monitoring of boys' progress is satisfactory and improving. When a boy is identified by the teacher as underachieving, then very effective action is taken that leads to improvements in most cases. However, the college has only recently started to make effective use of computer systems which will enable senior managers to monitor the progress of groups of pupils and to pick out patterns in the performance of pupils.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Senior managers are effective in raising boys' achievement and providing good quality care. Staff have rallied behind the headteacher and the shared vision for the future is excellent. The college has invested heavily in developing middle managers and this is now paying dividends. There is clear line management and, for instance, heads of departments are now being held to account for the performance of their departments. There is still some variation in quality and analyses by some departments do not always give sufficient attention to the progress made by boys. This is particularly important

as the abilities of different year groups vary. A particular strength of the college is the way new teachers are inducted into the college. They are supported exceptionally well by senior managers and their departmental colleagues. Consequently, they settle very quickly and manage their classes well. Governors have a wide range of expertise and carry out their 'critical friend' role well. The college deploys its resources very well and this contributes to the fact that different groups of pupils make good progress. It also makes best use of the old, inadequate accommodation.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for your help when we inspected your college. We spoke to some of you in small groups and others in classrooms and around the college. We agree with you that St Aloysius is a good college. You are rightly proud of its achievements. You told us that you enjoy coming to college, you feel safe there and that the few incidents of bullying or racial abuse are dealt with effectively. We think that the college council members do a good job for you. They spoke well to us and eagerly explained how they think they have been able to influence matters.

You told us how much things have improved in recent years. Much of this is due to your excellent headteacher and the way staff, including the administrative staff, and the governors have worked so hard to support him in looking after your interests. As one of you said, 'The headteacher is always there.' We agree with what one of the groups of boys said to us. You make good progress in your work because of the challenging teaching, the very good relationships that you enjoy, the orderly working environment, the opportunities to retreat to a quiet environment when needed and the opportunities to develop leadership skills. We were also very impressed by your excellent spiritual awareness. This comes from the way in which the Catholic ethos spreads right through the life of the college. It is not so much taught as absorbed. It is also reflected in the excellent contribution that you make to the life of the college and to the local community. For instance, some of you like to help with the 'teens and toddlers' project but there are many other examples. Please keep up the good work! The high levels of concern for an individual boy is shown by the very good way the college, and yourselves, look after boys who might be less fortunate than yourselves.

The college is not complacent and wishes to make things even better for you. We have made a couple of suggestions that we think would help. Until this year the college has not offered enough work-related courses to the older boys. It is now doing so in Year 10. We would like the college to check how well this working and, if necessary make further improvements. The departments use different methods to assess how well you are doing. We would like the college to choose the best method so that you learn as well as you can.

For your part, you can continue to work hard and some of you could get to college on time more often.

We wish you continuing success in the future.

Barry Jones
Lead inspector