

# St John Bosco Arts College

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	104715
<b>Local Authority</b>	Liverpool
<b>Inspection number</b>	287016
<b>Inspection date</b>	26 April 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Deborah Vaughan-Jenkins HMI

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Girls
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	1094
6th form	194
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr John Gibbons
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Anne Pontifex
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	24 February 2003
<b>School address</b>	Stonedale Crescent Liverpool Merseyside L11 9DQ
<b>Telephone number</b>	0151 5466360
<b>Fax number</b>	0151 5485949

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one Additional Inspector.

## Description of the school

St John Bosco's Arts College is an average-sized Catholic Salesian college for girls aged 11 to 19, approximately six miles from the centre of Liverpool. Of the 1,094 students, 194 study in the sixth form. The college is located in an area of high social and economic deprivation. A much higher than average proportion of students is eligible for free school meals. Students enter the college with broadly average ability. Over a quarter of students have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, although there are fewer with a statement of special educational need. The vast majority of students are of White British heritage and very few have English as an additional language. Around 90% of students are of Roman Catholic faith. The college was granted specialist school status for visual and performing arts in September 2004 and recently gained re-designation of its Healthy Schools Award, SportsMark Award and Investors in People status. Since 2005 the college has been working as part of the Alt Valley Collaborative with four other high schools and two special schools in order to offer a wider range of programmes. The college is the host site for the Bosco City Learning Centre (CLC).

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

St John Bosco Arts College is a good and improving college with outstanding features. The college is innovative in its approach to breaking down barriers to learning and raising students' aspirations. It is successfully living out its vision to make sure that 'every member of the college community has the opportunity to flourish and fulfil their potential with hope and confidence'.

Students make good progress through Years 7 to 11 although progress between subjects in the sixth form is variable and is a key challenge for the college. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are very well supported and achieve well. The standards reached by all students in both the main college and sixth form are broadly average although standards of students' work in English at Key Stage 3 were below average in 2005/06. Students' work and individual achievements are widely celebrated throughout the college and this successfully inspires them and raises their self-esteem. Students' personal development and well-being is outstanding. The safety and well-being of students is given a high priority. The development of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is superb and enables them to conduct themselves maturely and with confidence. There are good opportunities to make a positive contribution to the college and community particularly through the college's annual arts festival, which encourages students' team working skills. Effective work-related learning enables students to develop very good workplace skills and this supports their future economic prospects.

A culture of high expectations is promoted by teachers and managers. Students enjoy their lessons and develop very positive relationships with teachers, which contribute to students' excellent attitudes towards learning. Progression rates to the sixth form and to higher education (HE) are improving. The quality of teaching and learning is also improving because it is given an increasingly high profile and is monitored rigorously by senior managers. Equality of opportunity is promoted effectively around the college and in lessons. Attendance, although broadly average, is carefully tracked and is improving. The well maintained, high quality accommodation and specialist resources provide a creative and stimulating environment which is conducive to learning and which students value and respect.

The college has fostered, and continues to develop, very strong partnership arrangements which contribute significantly to its drive for improvement. The excellent links with the CLC, Alt Valley Collaborative and a Learning Network of primary and secondary schools enhance both the range and quality of provision. The main college provides an outstanding and highly inclusive curriculum which is continuously evolving in order to successfully meet the needs of all its learners. The good curriculum in the sixth form is also evolving rapidly and has improved markedly to offer a wider choice of academic and vocational options. This too is helping to raise standards and achievement. Care, guidance and support are outstanding in the main college. All students, including the most vulnerable, are very well provided for through rigorous safeguarding and careful monitoring to give them every chance to succeed. In the sixth form care, guidance and support are good overall, although effective academic guidance is not as strong as in the main college. It is improving to appropriately guide students to a more tailored curriculum. Pastoral support is very strong. The vast majority of parents hold the college's work in high regard.

The achievement of specialist college status has injected enthusiasm and released creativity in a variety of ways. Some subjects undertake more imaginative approaches to teaching, such as

role playing a forensic crime scene. Drama productions have become more ambitious and a new GCSE in music was added to the curriculum this year. The college achieved most of its targets for students' achievements in this area in 2005/06.

St John Bosco has good leadership and management. The leadership from the headteacher is outstanding. She, along with an enthusiastic and able senior management team and an experienced governing body, provide a clear direction for the college. The drive for high quality education for all learners is beginning to filter to all levels of management. The use of data and monitoring of performance have improved significantly and are now key factors in moving the college forward. Governors perform their duties well and provide support and challenge to the leadership team. The management of resources is good. Through relevant and supportive staff development and training all staff are encouraged to work to their strengths. In addition, significant investment has been made in information and communication technology (ICT) to support the learning environment. The college provides very good value for money.

The college's evaluation of its provision is largely accurate although it is too modest in its judgements of both students' personal development and well-being and of the main curriculum which inspectors raised from good to outstanding. Senior managers know the college well and use self-evaluation very effectively as a tool to promote improvement and target concerns. Pockets of underperformance still remain and it is too early to judge the full impact of all of the actions taken. The college has good capacity to improve its provision further.

### **Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form**

#### **Grade: 3**

The effectiveness of the sixth form is satisfactory and improving. Students do well on vocational courses but less well in some AS and A2 subjects. A range of initiatives to raise standards are in place and are beginning to take effect. The newly developed collaborative work with six local schools has significantly enriched the curriculum, providing a much wider choice of subjects and levels to match individual needs. Out-of-hours learning has been encouraged to enable students to extend learning into the evening and at weekends. Good links have been developed with local universities and the proportion of students progressing to HE has increased considerably over three years to 63%; this is significant considering many students come from families who do not necessarily have a history of entering HE. The college has rightly prioritised the uneven quality of teaching and assessment practice between subjects as a key area for development. Leadership and management of the sixth form are good. Underperforming subjects are quickly identified and swift action taken. There is good capacity for further improvement.

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

- Improve standards in English at Key Stage 3.
- Ensure consistently high standards and rates of progress in the sixth form.

### **Achievement and standards**

#### **Grade: 2**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 3**

Standards on entry to Year 7 are broadly average; the proportion of higher attaining pupils is low and the numbers with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are high. Standards in national tests at the end of Year 9 have been rising over the last three years and were broadly average in 2005. In 2006, however, standards in English dropped significantly. The college has analysed

carefully the reasons for this and has put in place measures to tackle this. Standards at the end of Year 11 have risen significantly for the last three years and confirm the overall good progress students make. In 2006 the college exceeded its targets. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make similar progress to other students.

Achievement in Years 12 and 13 was satisfactory in 2006. From below average starting points students attained below average standards overall. Standards varied considerably in different subjects, however. The college has introduced strategies to improve achievement in Years 12 and 13 by, for example, expanding the range of courses and qualifications to meet the needs of students more effectively. This is already paying dividends and the college is able to demonstrate that achievement is improving rapidly.

## **Personal development and well-being**

**Grade: 1**

**Grade for sixth form: 1**

'The best thing about this college is the family atmosphere. It's not clinical. We count as individuals and the teachers really care for us and help us do our best'. This was one pupil's perceptive comment about her enthusiasm for life at the college. Students really enjoy coming to college. Attendance rates are improving. They are close to national averages and higher than local figures. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding and supported effectively by the Catholic values at the heart of the college. Their behaviour is exemplary. They are welcoming and polite to visitors. Students understand how important healthy living is and appreciate the college's healthy living programme which incorporates themes such as eating disorders and body image. Students feel safe and are confident that adults will help them with any concerns. Students make a good contribution to the community by raising money for charities and acting as 'buddies' to younger pupils, for example. The student council is an active body which is valued highly. By the time they leave college students are confident, inquisitive and articulate. Preparation for their future economic well-being is good.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 3**

Lessons are very well planned and effectively designed to meet the range of students' differing abilities. ICT is often used to very good effect to increase students' motivation and engagement. The quality of teaching and learning is more uneven in the sixth form but improving, a point recognised in the college's own evaluation. There is excellent support provided to enhance students' learning and raise aspirations. A range of well-attended additional activities such as coursework weekends, homework clubs and pre-examination warm up sessions successfully encourage many students to work as hard as they can. Assessment is generally used well to monitor students' progress against their learning targets. However, in some cases written feedback on students' work is too cursory and does not always give sufficiently detailed advice about what could be done to improve further. Most parents and/or carers are overwhelmingly supportive of the college's work. A well received 'revision skills session' for parents is held

annually to provide hints and tips on how they can best provide support through examinations periods.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

**Grade: 1**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

The curriculum in the main college is outstanding and good in the sixth form. The recent introduction of three option pathways to cater for varying abilities and the introduction of modular-based courses in some subjects is proving successful in raising students' achievement and motivation. The specialist arts status has enhanced the curriculum and has encouraged other subjects to take a more creative approach to teaching and learning, such as performing a Spanish nativity play to local schools and using dance in science to demonstrate aspects of human biology. The range of extra-curricular activities is extensive, from trampolining to singing groups; they are well attended and highly valued by students. A range of evening classes such as salsa dancing are available for parents.

## **Care, guidance and support**

**Grade: 1**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

Care, guidance and support for students in the main college are outstanding. In the sixth form they are good and improving rapidly to support students' academic progress. Rigorous monitoring and tracking of students' academic progress means that they know their targets and what they need to do to reach or exceed them. Procedures for ensuring the safety of students are firmly established and reviewed regularly. Effective transition arrangements ensure that students settle in quickly when they arrive. The college does all it can to guide students into suitable careers or study after Year 11. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are identified early so that effective programmes can be set up to meet their needs. Liaison with outside agencies is wide reaching and highly effective. Students appreciate the care, guidance and support the chaplain provides. 'She's always there for us and we know she'll help and support us, if she can.'

## **Leadership and management**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

Leadership and management are good with good capacity to improve further. The headteacher provides excellent leadership, ably supported by a team of highly committed and experienced senior managers and governors. There is a clear focus on driving up standards which is beginning to permeate throughout the college, with increased levels of accountability amongst middle managers. The impact of key changes to the curriculum and an increased focus on learning are starting to make a real difference to the students' experience and achievements. A range of pilot programmes and initiatives are in place to further strengthen the quality of provision. The college is due to pilot the specialist 14 to 19 diploma in creative and media from 2008.

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## Annex A

## Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	2	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

### Achievement and standards

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

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	1	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	
The behaviour of learners	1	
The attendance of learners	3	
How well learners enjoy their education	1	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	2	3
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	1	2
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	1	2

<sup>1</sup> 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.

## Annex A

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1	
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	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No	
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No	

**Annex B****Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

We would like to thank you for making us so welcome in your college. We managed to speak to groups of you throughout the day - either in lessons or meetings or whilst walking around the college building. Your conduct, maturity and confidence impressed us from the moment we arrived. This letter aims to summarise what we found during our day.

We found your college to be good with outstanding aspects. From Years 7 through to Year 11 you achieve well and make good progress. In the sixth form your achievement is more variable depending on the subjects you are studying. Some of you are achieving very well although some of you could be achieving much better. We agree with you that teaching is good, particularly in Years 7 to 11. We were particularly impressed by your positive attitudes to learning and the way you conduct yourselves maturely and with confidence. You have a wide and growing range of courses and extra-curricular activities to help you achieve and develop as individuals. The care and support you receive, particularly in the main college, is really making a difference in helping you achieve as well as you can. You expressed how much you value the good relationships you have with your teachers and we agree this is a strength of the college. It was clear from our visit how much the gaining of specialist visual and performing arts status has meant to you. It has improved the quality of your experience at college through lessons, the choice of courses available, and in the attractive buildings, classrooms and very good arts-related equipment.

Your college and sixth form are well led and managed and your headteacher along with the college's senior managers are doing an excellent job in making sure your college strives to be even better. They know what is needed to improve and are working hard to make sure this happens across all subjects and year groups.

We suggested that the college needs to focus on improving the following two areas.

- To improve the levels you reach in English in Year 7, 8 and 9.
- To improve your achievement and standards of work in the sixth form so that you are all achieving as well as you possibly can in all subjects.

You of course can help the college to achieve this by continuing to work as hard as you can in all lessons.

Thank you once again for your invaluable contribution to this inspection and we would like to wish you all every success for the future.