

Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

T 08456 404040
F 020 7421 6855
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



26 January 2009

Mr T Mannion
Headteacher
St Aloysius' RC College
Hornsey Lane
Highgate
London
N6 5LY

Dear Mr Mannion

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Planning for change: the impact of the new Key Stage 3 curriculum

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on Monday 26 January 2009 to look at work in planning for and implementing the new Key Stage 3 curriculum with particular reference to Year 7.

The visit provided valuable information which will contribute to our national evaluation and reporting. Published reports are likely to list the names of the contributing institutions but individual institutions will not be identified in the main text. All feedback letters will be published on the Ofsted website at the end of each half-term.

The evidence used to inform the judgements made included interviews with staff and students, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of students' work and observation of six part-lessons. At the time of the inspection the school was undergoing a major building programme which had a considerable impact on the learning environment.

The overall effectiveness of the planning for and the implementation of the new Key Stage 3 curriculum was judged to be good.

Achievement and standards

Standards on entry to the present Year 7 are slightly below average. At this early stage of the implementation of the new Key Stage 3 curriculum, it is not possible to make a firm judgement on its impact on achievement but the progress of students in lessons was good.

- The quality of work in exercise books shows students are making good progress.
- Despite the difficulties caused by the extensive building environment, behaviour in lessons and around the school is good. Students are

polite, friendly and supportive of one another. Students respond well to the demands made by their teachers which enables them to make good progress.

- There are a wide variety of clubs and visits for students to be involved in and they speak very positively about this.

Quality of teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning in Year 7 is good.

- Relationships between students and teachers are very positive. Teachers plan lessons well and use a range of resources to motivate students. They have good questioning skills; in the best lessons this requires students to give extended answers and use high level vocabulary. In a few lessons, teachers too readily accept simple answers. Some teaching remains didactic and opportunities to develop students as independent learners are not always fully utilised.
- Innovative practice includes a project where Year 11 students teach some Year 7 English lessons. This has had a positive impact on the motivation and progress of both year groups. Skilful planning and support provided by teachers enabled students to make good progress; particular impact was seen in the understanding of technical subject specific vocabulary by Year 7 students.
- The school's emphasis on assessment for learning is very apparent. Students know the levels they are working at and what they need to do to improve. Some excellent examples of formative marking were seen. However, sometimes teachers' comments relate more to presentation and attitude than constructive areas for improvement.
- Senior leaders have been creative in using teachers to support more vulnerable students through joint teaching. This has had the added benefit of enabling colleagues to improve teaching in their departments through collaboration.

Quality of the curriculum

The quality of the new curriculum in Year 7 is good.

- A strategic approach has been taken in developing the new curriculum. All departments have reviewed their schemes of work and used the opportunities presented by the reduced content to focus on developing the skills of learners. Functional skills are mapped in schemes of work and are a strong aspect not only in English, mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT) but also across the curriculum.
- A strength of the curriculum is the expectation that all departments identify how they contribute to the Every Child Matters agenda. This ensures that teachers understand the contribution they make to developing the student as a whole person.
- The school's specialism in mathematics and computing is recent. However, its impact can be seen in developing functional skills across the curriculum and providing a wider curriculum in the Saturday Academy for Year 7 students.

- Some cross-curricular links have been exploited, particularly those linked to the school's specialism in mathematics and ICT. Planning for more formal collaborations are in their early stages.

Leadership and management of the new Key Stage 3 curriculum

The leadership and management of the new Key Stage 3 curriculum are good.

- Despite the disruptive effect of the extensive building works, senior leaders have been very effective in focussing the attention of staff in developing the new curriculum and in ensuring that behaviour in lessons is remarkably good.
- Senior leaders have set a very clear direction for staff. Their vision for developing responsible citizens for the future drives their thinking of the curriculum. This has been followed up with in-house training as well as enabling teachers to be informed of developments at the local and national level.
- Middle leaders are positive about changes in the new curriculum, particularly the flexibility to personalise the curriculum and develop more creative, engaging teaching and learning opportunities. Senior and middle leaders recognise that developments with respect to ensuring teaching methodologies promote independent learning are not yet fully embedded.
- Views of students have not been formally sought in developing the new curriculum but opportunities for students to inform future developments exist.

Inclusion

The impact of the curriculum on inclusion is good.

- Transition arrangements are good. Senior and middle leaders visit some of the many primary schools students come from. This has enabled school staff to have detailed information on the needs of the students, particularly their pastoral needs. Curriculum links to ascertain the knowledge and skills students arrive at the school with are not yet fully embedded.
- Students are very positive about the Saturday Academy where they are supported in developing their social skills, become more physically active and develop mathematics and ICT skills. Although the Academy's work is informed by the mainstream curriculum, opportunities for more explicit links, for example, pre-teaching of units, are not fully exploited.
- Links with a local football club have had a positive impact on students' progress in literacy and numeracy, particularly because learning takes place in a meaningful and relevant context.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- ensuring that teaching is more consistent in developing students' engagement and their independence in learning.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop the curriculum in the school.

As I explained in my previous letter, a copy of this letter will be sent to your local authority and will be published on the Ofsted website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Asyia Kazmi
Her Majesty's Inspector