

# St Joseph's Catholic High School

## Inspection report

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|--------------------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Unique reference number</b> | 110087                |
| <b>Local authority</b>         | Slough                |
| <b>Inspection number</b>       | 378050                |
| <b>Inspection dates</b>        | 11–12 January 2012    |
| <b>Lead inspector</b>          | Christine Raeside 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>                      | Modern (non selective)                             |
| <b>School category</b>                     | Voluntary Aided                                    |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>                 | 11–18  |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                    | Mixed  |
| Gender of pupils in the sixth form         | Mixed  |
| <b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b> | 707  |
| Of which, number on roll in the sixth form | 69   |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>               | The governing body                                 |
| <b>Chair</b>                               | Canon Kevin O'Driscoll                             |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                         | Mr Kevin Jones                                     |
| <b>Date of previous school inspection</b>  | 10 December 2008                                   |
| <b>School address</b>                      | Shaggy Calf Lane<br>Slough<br>Berkshire<br>SL2 5HW |
| <b>Telephone number</b>                    | 01753 524713                                       |
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## Ready for sign off

|                           |                    |
|---------------------------|--------------------|
| <b>Age group</b>          | 11–18              |
| <b>Inspection date(s)</b> | 11–12 January 2012 |
| <b>Inspection number</b>  | 378050             |



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## Introduction

Inspection team

Christine Raeside

Her Majesty's Inspector

Jamie Clarke

Additional inspector

Sarah McDermott

Additional inspector

Annette Rhodes

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed 32 teachers teach 33 lessons, of which four were joint observations with members of the senior team. In addition, the inspection team made short visits to a number of lessons, sometimes accompanied by a senior leader. They held meetings with four groups of students, the Chair of the Governing body and school staff, including senior and middle leaders. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documents, including the school improvement plan, minutes of governing body meetings and school policies. They also analysed 157 parents' and carers' responses to inspection questionnaires and others completed by students and staff.

## Information about the school

St. Joseph's is a smaller than average school. About two thirds of students are from minority ethnic groups and a much larger than average proportion speak English as an additional language. The school has a growing cohort of Polish students, currently about a quarter of the school roll. The proportion known to be eligible for free school meals is about half the national average. The proportion identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities and at the school action stage of support is above the national average; a lower than average proportion is identified as being at the school action plus stage, or have a statement of special educational needs. The school meets the current government floor standard (the minimum standards pupils are expected to reach). It has specialist status in the arts. At the time of the last inspection, the sixth form had only just opened; it has since trebled in size. The current headteacher took up post in September 2009.

## Inspection judgements

|                                       |          |
|---------------------------------------|----------|
| <b>Overall effectiveness</b>          | <b>3</b> |
| <b>Achievement of pupils</b>          | <b>3</b> |
| <b>Quality of teaching</b>            | <b>3</b> |
| <b>Behaviour and safety of pupils</b> | <b>3</b> |
| <b>Leadership and management</b>      | <b>3</b> |

## Key findings

- This is a satisfactory school. In 2011 there was a striking improvement in GCSE results. The proportion of students achieving five or more GCSE passes at grades A\* to C, including English and mathematics, rose to 55%, just below the national average. Given the students' low attainment on entry to the school, this represents considerable improvement in progress over time, especially in the core subjects of mathematics, English and science. Overall, students' progress is satisfactory because improvements are not yet fully established across all subjects.
- The sixth form is satisfactory. It is growing in number and its curriculum, despite the constraints of a small school, is expanding and diversifying in response to students' needs and interests. Achievement is varied and stronger in BTEC courses than in A levels.
- Teaching is satisfactory, although uneven across the curriculum. Improved and more consistently good teaching in some subjects, notably English, mathematics and history, contributed strongly to the improved attainment in 2011. Elsewhere the quality of teaching varies and too often takes insufficient account of students' individual learning needs or starting points.

Although lively and energetic, students are polite, friendly and generally well-behaved around school. They engage in the life of the school through student-voice focus groups. The very great majority of parents and carers feel that their child is safe in school. However, the management of behaviour in lessons is too inconsistent. Students and their parents and carers express concerns about occasional interruptions to learning by chatter or inattentive behaviour. This happens where teaching is weaker and less well-matched to students' needs.

- The headteacher, senior staff and governing body know the school's strengths and weaknesses. Their actions to improve achievement have been particularly effective. They have identified that some teaching is still not good enough and are taking action to improve it, but this needs greater urgency and rigour.
- Students from a range of backgrounds get on well together. Senior leaders have been responsive to the needs of students who speak English as an additional

language and there is strong support from bilingual teaching assistants.

Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Review and strengthen strategies to improve teaching and learning, so that the monitoring and evaluation of teaching by leaders at all levels is rigorous and sharply focused on the learning and progress of all groups of students.
- Improve the quality of teaching so that it consistently matches the quality of the best in the school, by ensuring that all teachers
  - plan lessons and adapt activities and tasks so that they meet the needs of the full range of students
  - have high expectations for all and ensure that learning is well-paced to maximise progress
  - actively involve students in their own learning through structured pair- and group-work and independent study
  - consistently apply whole school behaviour management policies and procedures so that no one is distracted from learning
  - provide regular, constructive and developmental feedback to students, both orally and in marking, so that all students know how to improve their work.

## Main report

### Achievement of pupils

In 2011 the school achieved its best ever GCSE results and reversed a previous trend of low attainment. From much lower than average starting points and in a context where many high-ability students attend local grammar schools, students made good progress in a range of subject areas, including mathematics and science. The overall proportion attaining five or more GCSEs at grade C or better reached 77%, touching on the national average and 25 points higher than at the time of the last inspection. Most parents and carers feel that their child is making good progress. Across the whole curriculum, however, achievement remains uneven.

In lessons where the teacher has taken careful account of the needs of every individual, learning is faster and more effective because students sustain high levels of interest and enthusiasm throughout. They are willing learners even when the lesson does not inspire them, but will lose heart and become more easily distracted if they find the work too easy or too difficult.

The achievement of students who speak English as an additional language has been better over time than that of their peers and better than the same group of students nationally. Within this group, Polish students did particularly well in relation to their targets in 2011. In lessons, they make progress at least in line with expectations and better when teaching is specifically planned to support their rapid acquisition of English.

The achievement of students with special educational needs is generally satisfactory, although within this group there are variations. Targets for these students are appropriately demanding; there are some striking examples of individuals overcoming severe difficulties and being well supported by the school to succeed in spite of significant obstacles. One boy was described by a parent as 'extremely happy' thanks to the effort made by the school to help him cope with a specific learning need.

Careful progress tracking in the sixth form indicates that virtually all students are in a strong position to meet their targets this year. Progress in BTEC courses is generally good; in AS and A level subjects attainment is below national averages, but students begin from a lower base than their peers nationally. Current assessment information suggests that gaps in achievement between sixth form courses are narrowing.

### **Quality of teaching**

In the better lessons, learning proceeds at a brisk pace because the teacher is clear from the outset about the purpose of the lesson and regularly checks understanding. Relationships are extremely co-operative and productive; paired- or group-work is carefully planned to support this. Students work with confidence and interest because activities have been imaginatively devised and adapted to ensure that everyone can improve, whatever their starting point. Questioning is targeted at individuals and designed to probe and develop thinking, including deep reflection on their own learning or on the wider moral and cultural implications of the lesson. In a food technology lesson, the teacher demonstrated an acute understanding of students' prior knowledge and capabilities. Her systematic checking of understanding and highly effective intervention meant that progress was exceptional. In this lesson, students felt great confidence in their capacity to achieve. Similarly, students discussing challenging ideas in poetry in an English lesson showed insight and perception at a level beyond their target grades. They expressed high aspirations to meet or exceed these grades and showed great appreciation of how well their teacher had helped them to develop their skills. They reflected with great maturity on the poet's approach to issues of gender and power in relationships.

Parents and carers expressed strong support for the quality of teaching at the school, with the very large majority viewing it as good. A few, however, disagreed and commented on inconsistencies or areas for improvement. Only about a quarter of students who responded to the inspection survey felt that teaching was good all of the time. Inspectors agree that, despite some significant strengths, the quality of teaching overall is inconsistent.

Where lessons are less successful it is because the teacher takes a single approach

without adapting materials or tasks for the higher or lower attainers and expectations are often too low. Teachers' questioning is broad and unfocused; not everyone contributes or individual students dominate by calling out. Despite their generally good attitudes to learning, students may lose interest or their attention may wander, so that behaviour deteriorates. Students are able to discuss and refer to their target grades in a range of subjects. However, they don't always know what is required to reach these grades. They value very highly the good marking and feedback they receive, for example in English, but recognise that this is inconsistent within and across subjects. Their communication skills are greatly enhanced by the school's strong focus on English and mathematics. However, the curriculum is not yet coherently planned to secure the reinforcement of these skills in all subjects.

### **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

During the inspection students were welcoming, friendly and polite. Sixth form students take responsibility for behaviour as part of their house captain and mentoring duties. They dress smartly and set a strong example of maturity and positive attitudes to school. Attendance is broadly average, including in the sixth form. Rates of attendance are improving. Action to follow up absence and promote good attendance has become more rigorous since the appointment of a dedicated attendance officer.

Most groups of students say that they feel safe at school. They have a strong understanding of potential risk and of different types of bullying. They express confidence in their year managers to deal effectively with any problems. The majority of parents and carers agreed that the school deals effectively with bullying, but a few expressed concerns. Some expressed anxiety related to one specific incident which was investigated by inspectors; the school is aware of this and has taken appropriate and robust action, although the outcome has not yet been shared with all parties.

Students have an accurate and perceptive view of behaviour. They rightly have high expectations and view even minor interruptions to lessons as unacceptable. They achieve better in departments where behaviour management is consistent, clear and fair. Behaviour and safety are satisfactory overall, rather than good, because staff are inconsistent in their implementation of strategies to manage behaviour and because weaker teaching sometimes results in poor behaviour. There are effective systems for rewarding students and these are valued, but also inconsistently applied.

### **Leadership and management**

The headteacher has set a clear agenda for improvement, which is well supported and understood by most senior and middle leaders. Along with senior leaders, he has raised expectations for achievement and implemented mechanisms to secure sustained improvement. The first priority has been to establish effective teaching and good progress in English and mathematics and this is now in place. Finely-tuned systems for tracking students' are having a significant impact on achievement.

Senior leaders rightly see the next phase of the school's improvement being to build

on the best practice so that all leaders are equally effective in securing excellent teaching and achievement in their subject areas. The tracking systems which have proven so effective in English and mathematics are now in place in all subjects and for all year groups. However, their impact is variable because not all subject leaders are equally effective in the use of such systems. The capacity for further sustained improvement is therefore satisfactory.

Senior leaders monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching systematically. Joint observations with inspectors showed senior leaders' evaluation of strengths and weaknesses to be sharp and accurate. Variation in the quality of teaching and in levels of achievement show, however, that the impact of internal systems to improve the quality of teaching have not yet resulted in consistently good or better practice.

The governing body supports senior leaders well. The Chair of the Governing Body is an active participant in a raising achievement strategy with an external consultant, the impact of which is demonstrated in rising attainment and in the strongest lessons. Senior leaders and governors have ensured that the school's arrangements for safeguarding students meet statutory requirements and give no cause for concern. Equality is promoted effectively and discrimination is not tolerated.

The curriculum has expanded and become better suited to students' needs and interests since the last inspection. This has influenced better overall attainment at GCSE. In the sixth form, the constraints of small numbers have narrowed the curriculum in the past. Growth is leading to wider choice and greater personalisation, for example the initiation of separate A level sciences as progression from BTEC forensic science. School leaders provide impartial advice to ensure that students are increasingly well-matched to courses, even if this is best achieved elsewhere.

Students are keen participants in a range of activities to promote equality and enhance cultural understanding. The arts specialism makes a strong contribution to curriculum enhancement, for example through theatre trips and school productions. A multi-cultural day celebrates the range of cultures in the school and wider community. Students are able to reflect deeply on their own and others' experiences. This has included: participation in the AFAN - 'All Faiths and None' initiative; educational and cultural exchanges with a school in South Africa; travelling to India on a school journey, described by one sixth form student as being 'thrown out of his comfort zone' and an experience which taught him, 'humility about other people's circumstances compared with my own'.



## Glossary

### What inspection judgements mean

| Grade   | Judgement    | Description  |
|---------|--------------|--|
| Grade 1 | Outstanding  | These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.  |
| Grade 2 | Good         | These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.  |
| Grade 3 | Satisfactory | These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.  |
| Grade 4 | Inadequate   | These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves. |

### Overall effectiveness of schools

| Type of school       | Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools) |      |              |            |
|----------------------|---|------|--------------|------------|
|                      | Outstanding   | Good | Satisfactory | Inadequate |
| Nursery schools      | 46  | 46   | 8            | 0          |
| Primary schools      | 8   | 47   | 40           | 5          |
| Secondary schools    | 14  | 38   | 40           | 8          |
| Special schools      | 28  | 48   | 20           | 4          |
| Pupil referral units | 15  | 50   | 29           | 5          |
| All schools          | 11  | 46   | 38           | 6          |

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

|                            |   |
|----------------------------|---|
| Achievement:               | the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.   |
| Attainment:                | the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.  |
| Attendance                 | the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.   |
| Behaviour                  | how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.   |
| Capacity to improve:       | the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.                    |
| Leadership and management: | the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.                            |
| Learning:                  | how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.  |
| Overall effectiveness:     | inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.  |
| Progress:                  | the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started. |
| Safety                     | how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.             |

**This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.**

13 January 2012

Dear Students



### **Inspection of St Joseph's Catholic High School, Slough, SL2 5HW**

Thank for the very warm welcome you gave us when we inspected your school recently. We appreciated your willingness to talk to us about your learning. Your views were very valuable in helping us to reach a decision about the quality of education provided by your school.

St. Joseph's is a satisfactory school. The achievement of students who took GCSEs in 2011 showed a marked improvement on previous years and there are strong signs of continuing improvement into 2012 and beyond. The strongest gains have been in the very important subjects of mathematics and English. You told us that you are well taught in these subjects and we agree that they are making a strong contribution to your overall achievement, as well as giving you important core skills for the future.

We were very impressed with the mature and responsible attitude taken by sixth form students, acting as house captains or mentors to help the school run smoothly. We also thought that your student voice initiative provides good opportunities for you to get involved in improving your school and to have your say in a range of important issues, including through the 'Speak to Us' box.

Your behaviour in school while we visited was very welcoming and friendly. We spoke to lots of you in the playground and you told us you feel safe there and that adults look after you well. We agree, but we also agree with you that behaviour in lessons sometimes suffers because the lesson doesn't keep everyone involved or interested.

Although there is lots of good teaching in your school and some that is outstanding, overall it is still too mixed and this means that the progress you make is inconsistent across all of your subjects. We have asked your teachers to make sure that teaching is equally good in all areas so that the much improved results in 2011 become a building block for future success. You can help by: taking responsibility for your own learning; getting actively involved in all of your lessons and setting your sights on meeting or exceeding ambitious targets in your GCSEs and beyond.

Yours sincerely  
Christine Raeside  
Her Majesty's Inspector

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