

St Joseph's Catholic High School

Shaggy Calf Lane, Slough, Berkshire, SL2 5HW

Inspection dates 8–9 October 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Requires Improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- While the proportion of students making the expected level of progress is above average, too few make better than expected progress, most notably boys and those who speak English as an additional language.
- Not enough teaching is consistently good and outstanding. Some lessons provide insufficient challenge and pace to ensure all students actively engage in their learning, work independently or in groups or take responsibility for their own learning.
- Marking does not always make it clear to students how to improve their work.
- A few senior leaders lack the skills or experience needed to make a strong contribution to leadership across the school.
- Senior leaders do not focus sufficiently on progress when setting targets for students' achievement. Consequently, expectations are too low to raise students' aspirations and the proportion of students attaining the highest GCSE grades is lower than it should be in many subjects, particularly boys and those who speak English as an additional language.
- The sixth form requires improvement because there are weaknesses in the curriculum that limit some students' achievement and access to some subjects.

The school has the following strengths

- The interim headteacher, executive headteacher and governors have a clear vision for school improvement and have ensured that appropriate plans are in place to hold other school leaders to account for the quality of teaching and the progress made by all students.
- Students feel safe. They are polite and courteous and feel proud to be members of the school. Attendance has improved and is now above the national average.
- Provision for disabled students and those with special educational needs is well established and because of the high quality support provided these students often make good progress.
- There is some outstanding teaching and some excellent marking most notably in English.
- The governing body has taken effective action to resolve the historical financial deficit.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 30 lessons, of which 21 were joint observations with senior leaders. In addition, the inspection team looked at students' work in their books and listened to them read.
- Meetings were held with staff, groups of students, members of the governing body and with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors considered information provided by the school about students' recent and current progress and achievement; self-evaluation and plans for future development; records relating to attendance and behaviour; records of how leaders are held to account; and documents relating to safeguarding.
- Inspectors took account of the 45 responses to Ofsted's online Parent View questionnaire and the 55 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- During the inspection, inspectors asked additional questions designed to ascertain the strength of leadership in the school and the effectiveness of actions taken by the governing body to tackle clear the significant historical financial deficit.

Inspection team

Caroline Dearden, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Gill Walley	Additional Inspector
Kewal Goel	Additional Inspector
Suzanne Richards	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St Joseph's Catholic High School is smaller than the average sized secondary school with a sixth form.
- The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds and those who speak English as an additional language is much higher than average.
- The proportion of disabled students and those with special educational needs supported at school action is above average. The proportion supported as school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for students in local authority care, those known to be eligible for free school meals and children of service families is below the national.
- A small proportion of students in Year 10 and Year 11 follow on-site skills-based courses provided by the army charity 'Skills Force' for one day a week.
- The school meets the government's floor standards which sets the minimum expectations for students' performance.
- The proportion of students in Years 7 and 8 benefiting from the Year 7 catch-up premium is above average.
- The school has an interim headteacher who joined the school on a full-time basis in July 2013. The executive headteacher, who is also headteacher of another school, has provided additional guidance and support for the school since April 2013. The school was previously led and managed by two deputy headteachers from January 2012 to April 2013.
- Students in Years 10 and 11 are entered early for examinations mathematics.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure teaching is at least good and increase the proportion that is outstanding so that the best practice is shared for the benefit of all students by:
 - ensuring all teachers, including those with leadership responsibilities, know what good and outstanding teaching looks like
 - making sure all teachers consistently plan lessons that challenge and motivate students and by ensuring that the pace of learning is brisk enough to enable all students to make rapid progress
 - creating more opportunities for students to play an active part in their lessons, to work independently or in groups
 - encouraging students to take more responsibility for their own learning
 - making sure that the marking of students' work is consistent, gives precise information about what students need to do to improve their work and by providing opportunities for students to respond to the teachers' comments.
- Improve leadership and management to accelerate students' progress, especially for boys and those who speak English as an additional language, by:
 - setting ambitious targets to ensure that all senior leaders and teachers have expectations that raise the aspirations of all students
 - ensuring that senior leaders have a clear understanding of how to hold subject leaders to account for the impact of teaching over time on students' progress
 - making sure that the monitoring of the quality of teaching by senior and middle leaders is

always rigorous enough in order that weaker aspects are eradicated

- ensuring that students have access to subjects and courses in the sixth form that enable them to meet their personal needs and interests and to achieve well.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Achievement requires improvement because some students, particularly for boys and those who speak English as an additional language, are not making fast enough progress and the proportion of students attaining A* and A grades in GCSE is lower than it should be in many subjects.
- Over the last three years, including the school's unvalidated 2013 results, the proportion of students achieving five or more GCSE grades at A* to C including English and mathematics has fluctuated.
- The grades and levels of progress expected of students have not always been challenging enough; consequently, too few make better than expected progress. For students who speak English as an additional language, targets have been set in relation to poor language acquisition and low prior attainment at Key Stage 2 rather than their academic potential.
- Disabled students or those with special educational needs make good progress and attain good results in GCSE and other examinations from their starting points. This is because their needs are well known and they receive high quality support.
- Those students who enter the school in need of additional help with literacy are given very good support including through use of the Year 7 catch-up premium. Inspectors observed skilled support for these students in phonics and reading.
- The recently appointed co-ordinator for students who speak English as an additional language is providing effective support for students new to the school so that their needs are appropriately assessed and aspirational targets for their academic achievement are set.
- Some students in Years 10 and 11 enter GCSE examinations early, mainly in mathematics. Those who do not attain their targets continue to study the subject in order to improve their grades.
- In 2012, students supported by the pupil premium achieved approximately one GCSE grade lower than other students in English and mathematics. Unvalidated GCSE results for 2013 demonstrate a reduction in the gap to approximately half a grade in both subjects. This shows that these students are making expected progress and gaps are closing quickly. However, the proportion eligible for the pupil premium who made better than expected progress in mathematics was lower in 2013 than in 2012.
- The achievement of students in the sixth form requires improvement because while they enter Key Stage 5 with below average prior attainment they leave with A- and AS-level grades below national. The school has recognised that the sixth form curriculum does not match the needs of all students.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- The quality of teaching requires improvement because not enough is good or better; a small minority is inadequate. Consequently, some students do not actively engage in their learning, work independently or in groups or take responsibility for their own learning.
- As a result of lack of challenge in targets set by senior leaders for students' achievement, teachers' expectations are not always high enough. Consequently, lessons are not always planned sufficiently well for students' increasing aspirations.
- The main weaknesses in teaching concern insufficient challenge, lack of pace and insufficient opportunities for students to acquire the skills they need to learn for themselves. When this occurs, there is a tendency for some students to become passive or overly reliant on adult support. Low-level disruptive behaviour occasionally occurs where teaching is less effective.
- Written feedback to students is inconsistent. It is very effective when students are given clear steps on how to improve their work and when they have the opportunity to reflect and respond to teachers' comments, taking responsibility for their learning. The practice is especially evident

in English and drama.

- In the best lessons teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge, use questioning effectively to encourage students to think for themselves and develop their understanding. For example, in an outstanding Year 8 English lesson, all students were very focused and challenged each other's views about the meaning of a poem very effectively.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

- Behaviour and safety require improvement because in some lessons students are not actively engaged in their learning. Where teaching is not at least good students work slowly and become inactive at times; occasionally, low-level disruptive behaviour is a feature of less effective teaching or a consequence of low expectations.
- The vast majority of students have very positive attitudes about their school, are polite and well-mannered and demonstrate a great deal of respect for the staff and for visitors.
- The catholic values of the school are evident in the way students are cared for and in the way in which they behave. Discrimination of any kind is not tolerated and students are welcoming of difference. Students feel safe and are proud to be members of the school.
- Although bullying is extremely rare when it does occur it is tackled very quickly. Students have good awareness of the different forms of bullying and understand how to keep themselves safe.
- Attendance is improving and is above national. This is largely due to the school refusing to authorise holidays during term time.
- Exclusions in the previous two academic years were high with a number of students repeating the behaviours for which they were excluded. However, under the new leadership behaviour has improved significantly with only one exclusion so far this year.
- The majority of staff and parents believe behaviour is good; however, a significant proportion of each group responding to the questionnaires contradict this view. Inspectors found that low-level disruptive behaviour occasionally happens where teaching is less effective.
- Students who participate in on-site alternative education behave and attend well. Although they achieve well the school is reviewing whether or not the qualifications on offer support students' progression into further education, work or training sufficiently well.

The leadership and management

require improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement because senior leaders are not always rigorous in holding subject leaders to account for the quality of teaching and its impact on improving achievement.
- A few senior leaders have low expectations of students and targets set for students' academic achievement have not always been sufficiently challenging.
- In April 2013 the governing body and local authority acted decisively to appoint an executive headteacher to support and strengthen the quality of leadership. The subsequent appointment of an interim headteacher in July 2013 further strengthened the school's capacity to make the necessary improvements as evidenced by the improving quality of teaching and in students' aspirations to achieve high grades.
- The interim headteacher and executive headteacher have correctly identified the school's key weaknesses and drawn up plans to rectify them. Early signs are that the impact is positive, as shown by the increasing confidence in leadership expressed by staff and students. One Year 11 student commented, 'the new headteacher is brilliant; he knows how to mingle with us but also how to discipline us.'
- Recent procedures to hold staff to account and strengthen performance management have already eradicated much of the inadequate teaching. However, improvements are too new to have full impact on the numbers of students who exceed the expected rates of progress and those attaining the highest grades in examinations.

- The school's self-evaluation is accurate, realistic and well-focused. A wide range of training has been introduced to improve the quality of teaching. However, the leadership of teaching and learning is insufficiently sharp to identify where professional development or support can be used proactively to help teachers whose practice is not yet good; this includes sharing best practice for the benefit of all students.
- Students' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is a strong feature and contributes well to ensuring equality of opportunity for all. For example, Year 7 students who participated in a retreat considered how they could help those less fortunate through charity and voluntary work.
- The local authority has provided good support, especially in supporting governors to successfully tackle the significant historical financial deficit.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are very conscientious and committed to ensuring all students are well supported and cared for. They ensure safeguarding arrangements meet requirements. Recent restructuring has strengthened the governing body, which now includes members with the experience and expertise to challenge school leaders and hold them to account. Governors are keen to understand how well the school is doing and compare the school's overall performance with that of other schools locally and nationally. The detailed information provided by senior leaders on the school's performance ensures governors are better informed. Governors have authorised spending of the pupil premium and gaps in the attainment of those eligible and their peers are closing quickly. Governors have taken robust action to recover the significant historical financial deficit. Local authority support has ensured they are well placed to maintain the school's financial stability and resource the curriculum and secure building improvements. Actions taken by the governing body have significantly strengthened the leadership of the school and governors have worked with the executive and interim headteacher's to eradicate much of the inadequate teaching. They are receiving training to help them fully understand how salary progression is linked to pay progression.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	110087
Local authority	Slough
Inspection number	426540

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	694
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	60
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Father Kevin O'Driscoll
Interim Headteacher	Ciran Stapleton
Date of previous school inspection	11–12 January 2012
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