

St Joseph's Catholic College

Ocotal Way, Swindon, SN3 3LR

Inspection dates

12–13 November 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Inadequate	4
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Sixth form provision		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Achievement has risen significantly, particularly in English. Students achieve well in most subjects across the college.
- Students who speak English as an additional language receive effective support. As a result, they make good progress.
- The college uses extra government funding to good effect. Students who are eligible for the pupil premium funding achieve as well as, and often better than, their peers nationally and within the college.
- The quality of teaching is good. Through their strong subject knowledge, teachers plan learning activities which engage and enthuse students.
- The feedback and marking teachers provide for students are of a high quality. This enables students to understand what they have done well and what they need to do to improve further.
- Students behave very well both in and out of lessons. They have a good awareness of different types of bullying and how to keep themselves safe.
- The sixth form is well led and is good. Improvements in the quality of teaching ensure that standards are rising. Students receive helpful advice to ensure that they are on appropriate courses.
- The Principal and senior leaders provide highly effective leadership. They have brought about impressive improvements in the quality of teaching and students' achievement.
- Governors have a clear understanding of the college's strengths and areas to develop. They effectively monitor the college's progress towards meeting its targets, ensuring that it continues to improve. They provide an appropriate level of challenge and support to leaders.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Occasionally, the work provided for some students does not sufficiently challenge them.
- Sometimes, when completing work in lessons, students are unsure of the level they are working at and what they need to do to reach the next level.
- A minority of feedback and marking is not of the same quality as the rest.
- Not all leaders monitor and evaluate their departments as effectively as others.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 30 episodes of teaching. Four of these were conducted jointly with senior leaders. There was also a number of short visits to lessons.
- Meetings were held with the Principal and other leaders, teachers new to the profession, groups of students and members of the governing board.
- Inspectors observed students' behaviour at break and lunch times.
- A wide range of documentation was scrutinised, including information on students' achievement, the college's self-evaluation, external reports on the work of the college, minutes of meetings and records relating to the monitoring of teaching, behaviour and safety.
- Inspectors took account of 120 responses to the online Parent View survey.

Inspection team

Simon Rowe, Lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Victor Chaffey	Additional Inspector
Lesley Voaden	Additional Inspector
Robin Gaff	Additional Inspector

Full report

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

Information about this school

- St Joseph's Catholic College is a larger-than-average-sized secondary school.
- An interim executive board (IEB) is in place as part of the governance of the college. The IEB is responsible for monitoring the progress the college is making towards meeting its targets. A governing board is also in place to monitor the day-to-day running of the college.
- Almost half of the students are from minority ethnic backgrounds.
- The proportion of students eligible for the pupil premium funding (disadvantaged students) is below average. This is additional government funding to support students known to be eligible for free school meals and those in local authority care.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is below average.
- The college meets the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- Some students access courses at Oakfield, New College and Swindon College.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise achievement further by:
 - teachers setting work that challenges all students to reach the higher levels, regardless of their starting point, ability or background
 - providing students with guidance during lessons so that they know the level they are working at and what they need to do to reach the next level
 - ensuring all feedback and marking are at the level of the best.
- Further improve leadership and management by:
 - ensuring all leaders effectively monitor their subjects to evaluate and improve achievement and the quality of teaching.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The Principal provides inspirational leadership, setting the highest of expectations across the college. He is ably supported by senior leaders. Together, they create a challenging and supportive culture across the college where staff are helped to improve their performance. Consequently, the quality of teaching and achievement has improved swiftly across all year groups and in most subjects.
- Senior leaders provide appropriate, personalised training for teachers which helps them to improve the quality of their teaching. Teachers, including those new to the profession, feel well supported and understand the high expectations placed on them. The most effective teachers are used well to support and improve the practice of other colleagues.
- A culture of working together exists to ensure that students receive a highly effective educational experience. The very large majority of parents who responded to the Parent View survey feel the school is well led and managed; inspectors agree with this.
- Senior leaders and governors closely hold staff to account for the performance of the students they teach and for the quality of their own teaching. This has resulted in significant improvements in the quality of teaching and also to some staff, whose performance is not good enough, leaving the college.
- Associate leaders are increasingly being given more responsibility for the performance of their subject departments. The large majority of associate leaders monitor, evaluate and improve their departments well through a series of activities such as observing the quality of teaching, scrutinising the work students produce and analysing students' achievement data. A small minority of leaders, however, do not monitor their departments at the same high level as the majority.
- The allocation and impact of extra government funding, such as the pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up, are closely monitored. This funding is being used to good effect to enable eligible students to achieve their potential. Some students participate in a scheme to raise their aspirations through working with mentors and visiting universities. These students speak highly of this opportunity and all aspire to attend prestigious higher education establishments.
- The range of subjects students study is broad and balanced. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is of a high quality. There are regular opportunities for students to discuss and reflect upon sensitive issues such as discrimination, different cultures and their beliefs, as well as laws and people's rights. Students of all cultures and backgrounds forge strong relationships, show respect for each other and get on well.
- A range of good opportunities to experience and explore life beyond the classroom is available for students. This includes sporting and cultural activities.
- Students appreciate the high level of individual academic and pastoral support that they receive. The college ensures that every student, whatever their need, is provided with the support to enable them to be successful at the college. Students receive helpful, and timely, advice and guidance to ensure they are well informed and fully prepared when moving on to the next stage of their education or life beyond the college.
- Leaders rigorously monitor students' progress, attendance and behaviour, including those who access some of their education at other institutions.
- As the college improves it is, rightly, accessing less external support. Leaders, and the most effective teachers, are providing a good level of support to others within the college. The college does, though, receive effective support from a school improvement adviser. She works alongside leaders to conduct monitoring activities to ascertain the progress the college is making towards meeting its targets and to provide more, challenging targets to bring about further improvements.
- The college's safeguarding arrangements meet statutory requirements. The college and governors work effectively to address any concerns in a timely and efficient manner.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The interim executive board and the governing board have a clear and accurate understanding of the strengths of the college. They monitor the college's progress towards meeting key targets and ensure the college continues to improve. Governors have a good awareness of the college's performance and the quality of teaching. They hold leaders and staff closely to account for the performance of the college, rewarding the most effective staff, and tackling underperformance and withholding pay awards when necessary. Governors have a clear understanding of how government funding is being spent and the impact this is having. All safeguarding policies and procedures meet statutory requirements.

The behaviour and safety of pupils**are good****Behaviour**

- The behaviour of students is good.
- Students are very pleasant, polite and friendly. They conduct themselves well, both in and out of lessons, exhibiting good attitudes to learning and creating a harmonious atmosphere.
- Students are well prepared for each lesson, dress smartly and take pride in their uniform. They work well on their own and with their peers. Students indicate that disruption in lessons is uncommon; inspectors agree with this.
- Positive, working relationships exist between teachers and students. Students follow their teachers' instructions quickly, allowing lessons to proceed at a good pace, maximising learning time.
- Most parents who responded to the Parent View survey feel that the college makes sure that students are well behaved.
- The proportion of students who receive a fixed term exclusion is very low compared to national figures.

Safety

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good.
- Students have a well-developed understanding of different types of bullying and how to keep themselves safe. If bullying does occur, students are confident that the college would take this seriously and deal with it swiftly and effectively.
- Attendance levels are high compared to the national average. The proportion of students who are persistently absent is low.
- Leaders monitor closely the behaviour, safety and attendance of those students who sometimes attend other institutions. The vast majority of these students behave well and attend regularly.

The quality of teaching**is good**

- Teaching across most subjects, and in the sixth form, is at least consistently good. Teachers have high expectations of how students behave and what they are able to achieve. Clear routines are established which provide students with the confidence to offer their thoughts and ideas during discussions.
- Students take pride in their work and show a real determination to succeed.
- Teachers have strong subject knowledge and are passionate about their subject. They use effective questioning to assess students' understanding and to probe and deepen their conceptual understanding of key concepts and ideas.
- The quality of feedback and marking students receive is usually of a high quality. Students respond positively to this feedback and demonstrate a deep understanding of how they can improve their work further. A small minority of feedback and marking is not at the same high level as the best.
- Teachers effectively model their expectations and provide students with clear guidance on how they should structure answers. In most cases, students are provided with a choice of work so that they can select the appropriate starting point and then move on to extension work when they feel ready. This enables students to make good, and often better, progress.
- Occasionally, students are not fully aware of the level of work which is provided. Also, sometimes, the work provided for the most able students does not sufficiently challenge them. This limits the progress that students make.
- Teachers routinely develop students' key skills, particularly literacy, numeracy and reading. Students are encouraged to read widely and often. Links to numeracy skills are well established and teachers pay careful attention to students' written work and the use of key subject specific words across all subjects.
- Teaching assistants are effectively deployed. They work well alongside individuals and with groups of students to provide extra support and to ensure these students make good progress.
- Most planning by teachers indicates a strong awareness of individual students' specific needs. Teachers plan appropriate extra support and resources to support these students, particularly disabled students, those with special educational needs and students whose first language may not be English.

The achievement of pupils**is good**

- Achievement has risen significantly across the college and continues to improve. Students enter the college with levels of attainment above the national average. The proportion of students at the end of

Year 11 achieving five or more GCSEs, including English and mathematics, is well above the national average.

- Students make good progress across all year groups, and in most subjects, including the sixth form. Achievement is particularly high in English, religious education, art, drama and dance.
- The college sets challenging targets for students. Students are fully aware of these targets and are motivated to achieve them. The information that the college holds on students' achievement and through the work seen in their books indicate that students are making good progress towards meeting these targets.
- The college knows individual students' needs well. The progress of disadvantaged students, those eligible for the pupil premium funding, are tracked very closely by the college. Timely and effective extra support is provided where necessary and they make good progress. Extra government funding is used to provide extra, high quality teachers in English and mathematics to accelerate their achievement further. These students achieve around a third of a grade higher than their peers nationally in English and in line with their peers nationally in mathematics. There is no gap in the achievement between them and their peers within the college in English and mathematics.
- Students who enter the college with low levels of attainment and whose first language may not be English are receiving effective support to develop their literacy and reading skills. Intensive support is provided for these students, such as improving their reading skills through the teaching of phonics (letters and the sound they make). Extra government funding, including the Year 7 catch-up funding, is enabling some students to go to shops to purchase books so that they can extend their reading outside of school. These students make good, and often outstanding, progress.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs receive good support within their lessons as a result of teachers' understanding of effective strategies to support them. Teachers deploy teaching assistants to provide further, personalised support where necessary. Extra support outside of lesson times addresses students' individual needs; students make good progress across a wide range of subjects including English and mathematics.
- Some students, usually the most able, take their GCSE examinations at times other than the end of Year 11. This policy has been refined as the most able have not consistently achieved enough of the higher grades of A and A*. The proportion of students achieving these higher grades in English and mathematics is improving. The most able students currently at the college usually make good progress across the majority of subjects. In some subjects, however, not enough students achieve the higher grades.
- The progress of students who attend other institutions for some courses is rigorously monitored. College staff regularly visit these students, liaising with their teachers to provide any further support that may be necessary. Most of these students achieve well.

The sixth form provision

is good

- The college has a small sixth form. Students' achievement has been inconsistent across subjects in the past. The college has improved the quality of teaching, which is now good, and students currently in the sixth form are making good progress. Disabled students and those with special educational needs and disadvantaged students achieve as well as their peers.
- The sixth form is well led. Students receive good, impartial advice prior to making their sixth form choices to ensure that they are on appropriate courses.
- Students speak positively with regards to the sixth form. They behave very well and show a clear determination to succeed.
- Students receive effective personal development and are aware of how to manage risk and to keep themselves safe.
- Sixth form students ensure that they play a wider part in the college. They take on a range of responsibilities, including helping to develop the reading skills of younger students.
- A large majority of students progress to university on completing their studies in the sixth form.
- Students who enter the sixth form without a GCSE grade C in English or mathematics receive effective teaching to enable them to achieve this. The majority of students achieve a grade C or higher following this support.

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	136980
Local authority	Swindon
Inspection number	447434

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
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	1,226
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	99
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Canon John Cunningham
Principal	Paul Hughes
Date of previous school inspection	3–4 July 2013
Telephone number	01793 714200
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