

# St Joseph's Catholic Academy

Mill Lane, Hebburn, Tyne and Wear, NE31 2ET

**Inspection dates** 12–13 May 2015

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected as an academy	
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Leadership and management	Good		2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Outstanding		1
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.

- The headteacher's clear vision of just how successful the academy can be is shared by a first-class deputy headteacher and leadership team. All staff share their high ambitions and make significant contributions. As a result, the quality of teaching is much improved since the academy opened.
- An adroitly led governing body are fully aware of what the academy needs to do to build upon its many strengths.
- Teaching is good. Staff use their subject knowledge effectively to ensure that students of all starting points achieve well.
- The proportion of students attaining five or more good GCSE grades, including in English and mathematics, was above the national average when best entry results were taken into account.
- The proportion of the most-able students achieving higher grades is rising as the level of challenge in teaching gets ever higher.
- Teaching talent and skill are well nurtured and developed. Consequently, increased amounts of teaching are thought-provoking and inspiring.
- The strong academy ethos underpins students' excellent behaviour. High quality care keeps students safe and secure.
- The courtesy, politeness and respect shown by students are exemplary. The excellent promotion of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development makes an impressive contribution to their highly positive attitudes and desire to work and study.
- The sixth form is good. It promotes good achievement and ensures students are assured and well informed about the routes open to them when they leave.
- Members of the governing body are well informed about the academy's performance. They use their expertise skilfully to challenge and hold leaders and managers to account for students' performance.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Opportunities are sometimes missed to add to parents' confidence in the improving performance of the academy.
- Teachers' marking does not always make sure students are clear about what they have achieved well and provide clear steps for improvement and an increased level of challenge.
- The imaginative and inspiring approaches to teaching that exist in the academy are not shared widely enough.
- Not all tasks are closely enough matched to students' abilities; gaps in understanding are not always pinpointed accurately and sometimes the layout of work is inaccurate.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed teaching and learning in lessons and seven paired observations were carried out with the headteacher and senior leaders. Detailed work scrutiny was carried out. In addition, the inspectors made a number of short visits to lessons and undertook learning walks around the academy in order to check the quality of what is provided for students.
- The inspectors spoke with students and had discussions with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, staff, governors and the local authority school improvement adviser.
- The inspectors also examined a range of documents including those related to safeguarding, the academy's view of how well it is doing, the monitoring of staff performance, the academy's improvement plan and records relating to students' progress and behaviour.
- The inspectors took account of the 150 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and of the 52 responses to the staff questionnaire.

## Inspection team

Clive Petts, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Irene Lavelle	Additional Inspector
Geoffrey Lumsdon	Additional Inspector
Anne Smedley	Additional Inspector
Christine Cottam	Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- This is a much larger than average-sized secondary academy which caters for students aged from 11 to 18. St Joseph's Catholic Academy converted to become an academy school on 1 July 2013. When its predecessor school, St Joseph's Comprehensive School was last inspected by Ofsted in 2008, it was judged to be outstanding overall
- Most students are of White British backgrounds, with a very few who speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is above average.
- Currently, a below average proportion of the students are disadvantaged and therefore eligible for the pupil premium funding. This is lower than the national average. This funding is for those students who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those children who are looked after by the local authority.
- A very few students are from service families and are supported through the services premium.
- Close to half the students enrolled into the sixth form are from local schools. Almost all followed vocational courses in Key Stage 4.
- The academy meets the government's current floor standard, which is the minimum expectation for students' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- No students are currently entered early for GCSE examinations.
- A small minority of students from Year 10 and 11 attend vocational courses away from the academy site for some or all of the time. The courses are provided by South Tyneside College and Hebburn Comprehensive School. A very few students attend the local authority pupil referral provision full time.
- Since the previous inspection, there have been significant changes in staffing at all levels, including a new headteacher in September 2012.

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

- Improve teaching to outstanding in order to ensure a consistent and sustained pattern of rapid progress and high achievement by:
  - sharing the imaginative approaches to teaching that exist in the academy even more widely
  - raising staff expectations of what each student can achieve, especially the most-able students
  - using the good quality progress information to tailor tasks and activities to closely match the individual abilities, needs and interests of students
  - making certain students are clear about what they have done well and they are provided with well-defined steps for improvement.
  - 
  - more accurately identifying gaps and misconceptions in students' knowledge and understanding and making sure they always respond promptly to demands to complete corrections
  - ensuring that the accuracy of layout of students' work in books is of the highest standard in all subjects
- Continue to give a higher priority to engaging parents to build upon their confidence in the academy's performance.

## Inspection judgements

### The leadership and management are good

- In the successful drive to address the marked decline in achievement, since his appointment the headteacher has led the academy with drive and much determination maintaining a constant focus upon improving the quality of learning and boosting achievement. Together, an open-minded and reflective team of leaders and managers are constantly adding to the academy's strengths. This includes ensuring that the fall in attainment evident in the 2014 GCSE results is recovered.
- Academy staff share a common sense of purpose and are very ambitious for students. Staff make a strong contribution to the academy's highly positive ethos by setting excellent role models for students. Middle leaders are effective, set high expectations for staff performance and are increasingly self-critical and skilled in managing the areas for which they are responsible.
- Leaders, managers and staff work tirelessly to make certain each student has an equal chance of achieving success. The high levels of mutual respect are evident in the excellent relationships between staff and students. As a result, equality of opportunity is successfully promoted and discrimination in any form is not tolerated.
- The systems for checking the academy's performance are increasingly rigorous. Consequently, senior leaders have an accurate view of how well the academy is doing and the key priorities for improvement. They have an assured grasp of the further changes required to strengthen performance and how all improvement gains can be sustained.
- Teaching is effectively led and managed. Staff talents and skills are adeptly and sensitively nurtured. Senior leaders' expectations of performance are high and staff training is well matched to the academy's improvement priorities. Performance management makes sure there is no automatic pay progression. As a result, the quality of learning is constantly improving.
- The interesting curriculum is well matched to the abilities and interests of all students. The ideals of fair play, free speech, tolerance and equal rights are well rooted in learning, reinforcing British values successfully. Objective and helpful careers advice and support prepares students highly successfully for the next stage of their education, training or employment. A diverse range of visits and visitors enriches student's personal development extremely well. For example, following a visit from the National Citizen Service staff, over 50 students from Year 11 signed up as volunteers on social action projects.
- The pupil premium funding is used successfully to make sure that the needs of disadvantaged students are effectively met. Consequently, attainment gaps are closing, although more quickly in English than in mathematics. Funding is used to provide an inspiring array of activities and a programme of enrichment activities for students of all ages, such as for the superstar spellers and young writers motivated by the events of the Holocaust. This successfully ensures that students experience a range of opportunities to practise their skills.
- Safeguarding arrangements meet requirements and day-to-day practice to keep students safe is highly effective. This includes the comprehensive checking of attendance, achievement and behaviour of students of all ages, including those educated off-site.
- The local authority has an accurate view of the academy's performance. It has worked well with leaders since the academy opened, providing challenge and support in equal measure for senior leaders and managers.
- The academy promotes positive links with parents and families. In their responses to the online questionnaire, a very small minority did express concerns about the academy's performance. Following a period of unsettled staffing it is evident that as students' performance recovers, parents' confidence in the academy's performance is rising.
- The academy works closely with local schools and providers to make appropriate courses and progression routes available for students.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - The governing body of this multi-academy trust is highly committed to continuous and sustained improvement. It is well aware of past shortcomings in the level of challenge it presented to senior leaders. As a consequence, governors play a strong role in addressing funding challenges and ensuring financial viability and sustainability. They display an accurate grasp of the quality of teaching, check performance data and closely monitor the impact of pupil premium funding. Governors ensure that performance management is rigorous. Since the headteacher's appointment, the governing body has given him total support when challenging decisions needed to be made about the academy's effectiveness.

## The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of students is outstanding. Students' behaviour in classrooms is almost always exemplary. In social areas the calm, ordered, welcoming and friendly atmosphere reflects the highly positive academy ethos. Routines are extremely well established and students behave maturely, politely and courteously.
- Students' relationships with staff are excellent. This is a consequence of the high quality care and support that the staff provide. Students are keen and eager to learn, evident in their punctual arrival for each lesson. They are assured and confident in taking responsibility for their own learning, responding really positively to the demands that staff make.
- Classrooms, study areas and the library are harmonious places in which to work and study. Those students who are potentially vulnerable or who are anxious are managed skilfully and sensitively. Students apply themselves assiduously, especially when activities that are planned for them are thought-provoking and interesting. Disruption in any form is extremely infrequent.

### Safety

- The academy's work to keep students safe and secure is outstanding. In discussion, students observed that they feel safe and secure. Parents confirm this to be the case in their responses to the online questionnaire. Students are fully aware of the various forms that bullying can take; they report that it is uncommon and any inappropriate behaviour is promptly addressed by staff.
- Highly effective teaching and guidance ensure that students are well aware of the benefits of a healthy lifestyle. They are very aware of the dangers and risks associated with using the internet and social media networking.
- The academy has extremely robust routines for managing attendance, which is consistently above the national average. This includes thorough checks to ensure that students attending off-site provision are safe and their behaviour exemplary.

## The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is good, and at times imaginative and inspiring. The headteacher has maintained an extremely sharp focus upon improving the quality of teaching and learning since his appointment. Together, senior leaders have worked diligently to raise achievement. This includes recovering the slip in achievement evident in the 2014 GCSE performance. Underperformance is tackled resolutely and effectively. Consequently, teaching is improving strongly across subjects although some inconsistencies remain.
- Staff expectations of what students can achieve are rising and are sometimes high. For example, in an information and communication technology lesson, a group of Year 7 students were observed totally absorbed in using higher-level coding skills to produce a detailed webpage. Nevertheless, expectations of what students of all abilities can achieve are not always high enough, including for the most able. This can also be seen in the variable accuracy in the layout of students' work in their books.
- When thought-provoking activities result in students' rapid progress and high achievement:
  - stimulating activities challenge the thinking of students of all abilities and starting points
  - the available students' progress information is skilfully used to pinpoint any gaps in their knowledge and understanding, and shape tasks to set the correct level of demand
  - questioning continuously checks and tests students' thinking and understanding
  - activities motivate students to think analytically, make deductions and provide well-reasoned answers.
- When rates of progress are a little variable and achievement is modest:
  - the work set for students is not closely enough matched to meet their individual needs and present the right level of challenge
  - activities lack that essential spark to capture students' interest and stretch their thinking enough
  - teachers' questions do not follow students' thinking closely enough and systematically check for any misunderstandings
  - marking in books does not provide clear steps for improvement to add to the level of challenge.
- When achievement is highest, inspirational teaching fires the imagination and thinking of students and constantly examines their thinking. For example, in a lively English lesson Nicola Sturgeon and David Cameron were introduced into Macbeth, each arguing the case for and against independence for Scotland. However, imaginative and innovative approaches which encourage high achievement are not always

shared widely enough across the academy.

- The teaching of literacy and numeracy has an increasingly high priority across all subjects, including in off-site courses, in order to drive up standards. For example, students are actively encouraged to read often and widely, learn how to redraft their writing in the light of feedback and apply their mathematical skills to practical problems.
- Teachers mark work regularly and increasingly accurately assess the quality of students' work. Despite marking that is regularly and systematically completed, not enough marking demands corrections, ensures they are completed and provides clear guidance for improvement.

### The achievement of pupils

is good

- The headteacher's clear-cut focus upon improving the quality of teaching, thereby eliminating underperformance in order to accelerate progress and drive up achievement, is paying dividends. Since the academy opened, overall achievement has been raised, although it did fall in the GCSE examinations in 2014, largely because of exceptional staffing difficulties.
- Typically, students start the academy with broadly average skills and experience. In the 2014 GCSE examinations, the proportion of students attaining five or more A\* or A grades, including English and mathematics, fell below the national average. However, by the end of Year 11 best entry results revealed that the proportion was above average. In English, achievement and attainment was higher than in mathematics. However, recent action to strengthen the leadership of mathematics is leading to rapid improvement. In several subjects, including art, health and social care, religious education, history and information and communication technology, the proportion of students gaining grade C was significantly above national averages.
- Current patterns of progress in Year 11 show that students make good and sometimes rapid progress to achieve well. This is the result of teaching which is increasingly challenging and demanding. As a result, the fall in attainment and the variable progress evident in the 2014 GCSE examinations is being recovered successfully. The academy is on course to achieve the best results since it opened and exceed national averages for five A\* to C, including in English and mathematics, by a sizeable margin.
- The improving teaching is making certain that the achievement of the most-able students is rising steadily. Progressively, more tasks are incorporating challenges which encourage students to think critically, make deductions and arrive at well-thought-out conclusions. This captures and holds students' interest successfully. As a result, progress is faster and achievement higher. This is evident in the increased numbers of students who are on target to achieve higher grades in a range of subjects, including English, mathematics, science and humanities. Nevertheless, some inconsistencies remain in the level of challenge presented in some subjects.
- Attainment gaps in the performance of disadvantaged students compared with others nationally and their classmates are narrowing quickly. In English, gaps are narrowing quite rapidly. In 2014, wide gaps of well over one year between disadvantaged students and others nationally were evident in both English and mathematics. Gaps with their classmates were just under to one year. Current academy information, endorsed by inspection evidence, confirms that gaps in English and mathematics are on track to be narrowed significantly both with their classmates and others. In English, gaps are on course to be eliminated and reduced to one term in mathematics when compared to others nationally and their classmates. This is because the pace of students' progress is quickening and achievement is more consistent. Disadvantaged students make good progress when compared to similar groups nationally.
- Students who are disabled, those who have special educational and the very few who speak English as an additional language all make progress as least as fast as their classmates. The additional support that students receive for reading, writing and mathematics is ensuring that they achieve well.
- The Year 7 catch-up funding is being used effectively to boost the progress of essential literacy and numeracy skills. This is because intervention and support programmes are carefully matched to individual abilities and constantly build upon each student's learning.
- Students who are educated off-site for part or all of their timetable complete their courses successfully. This helps to make certain that all students progress to education, training or employment at the end of Year 11.

### The sixth form provision

is good

- Students of all starting points make good progress and achieve well to reach above average results at the

end of Year 13. Starting points vary considerably as close to half of the students are enrolled from local schools with largely vocational qualifications. Typically, entry levels are broadly average.

- The leadership and management of the sixth form are effective in promoting high aspirations and raising self-esteem. This ensures that all students are able to succeed and progress to higher education, further education, apprenticeships or employment. The constant focus upon improving the quality of teaching is ensuring that learning is stimulating and planned with a clear purpose. This is resulting in year-on-year improvements in achievement and attainment levels in most subjects. This includes for the most able and the disadvantaged.
- Teaching is consistently good over time and some is outstanding. Strong subject knowledge, skilful questioning, and thoughtful and inspirational approaches enable students to constantly add to their knowledge and deepen their understanding. At times, exceptional progress is made, particularly in Year 13. Staff ensure that students gain the essential confidence and skills to take responsibility for their own learning.
- The behaviour of students is exemplary. Students are courteous, polite and conscientious. They provide excellent role models for younger students. Students play a full and active part in academy life and greatly benefit from a wide and varied enrichment programme. For example, being responsible and active school council members, raising significant amounts of money for charitable causes and providing mentor support for younger students. Attendance is high and punctuality excellent.
- The high quality of careers guidance and support enables students to make well-informed decisions about their future. This prepares them extremely well for life after the sixth form. In conversation, students were appreciative of the way in which the academy keeps them safe and guides them to successfully manage the risks and dangers they may face.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	139878
<b>Local authority</b>	South Tyneside
<b>Inspection number</b>	461575

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Academy converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in the sixth form</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1,357
<b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b>	359
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Terry Carney
<b>Headteacher</b>	Frank O'Neill
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	Not previously inspected as an academy
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