

# Joseph Swan Academy

Saltwell Road South, Gateshead, Tyne and Wear NE9 6LE

## Inspection dates

12–13 April 2016

## Overall effectiveness

## Requires improvement

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Require improvement
16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement

- In recent years pupils' progress and attainment at GCSE have been no better than average. In some subjects, and for some groups of pupils, outcomes have been well below what should be expected. Assessment information indicates that GCSE outcomes are unlikely to be better than average this year.
- The progress of pupils currently in the school, although improving, remains too variable across subjects. This is, in part, because leaders have not checked rigorously enough the impact of policies and initiatives to improve pupils' progress.
- Leaders are improving teaching, but it is still too variable. Sometimes the work set is too easy and does not move pupils forward in their knowledge and understanding. Some work set in key stage 3 repeats topics pupils have already covered in primary school.
- Although teachers mark books regularly, some do not correct misconceptions or extend pupils' understanding, as the school's policy requires. Some teachers require further guidance to refine their marking to meet the school's requirements.
- Leaders have yet to implement a consistent approach to assessment that provides reliably accurate information about the progress pupils are making over time and across each key stage.
- The overall level of attendance is below the national average. Concerted efforts to improve attendance have only delivered marginal improvements so far this year.
- Senior leaders have not always communicated clearly enough the reasons why some policy changes have been introduced. They are aware of this and are developing strategies to address the concerns of some members of staff.

### The school has the following strengths

- The resilient headteacher has the strong support of governors and continues to drive improvement effectively. She has assembled a leadership team with the necessary skills and vision to drive forward improvements in teaching and learning.
- The broad curriculum and well-planned enrichment activities ensure pupils conduct themselves well and develop positive values that prepare them well for life in modern Britain.
- Learners make strong progress on 16–19 study programmes. They are highly complimentary about their experience in the sixth form.

## Full report

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

- Improve the quality of teaching across Years 7 to 11 in order to raise attainment and increase rates of progress by:
  - checking the impact current initiatives are having on pupils' progress and providing additional support and guidance for teachers where it is required
  - raising teachers' expectations and ensuring assessment information is used well to plan lessons that move pupils on quickly from their starting points
  - continuing to develop assessment practice so that data gathered on pupils' progress is accurate and reliable.
- Further develop strategies to address weaknesses in attendance.
- Ensure leaders at all levels clearly communicate the reasons for the introduction of necessary changes to improve aspects of the school's provision.

# Inspection judgements

## Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- Following the last inspection of the school in April 2014, the headteacher and governors recognised that changes needed to be made to ensure pupils made strong and sustained progress. In order to achieve this, the headteacher has remodelled the leadership team, tightened up on staff accountability and raised expectations. Although the required improvements are yet to be fully realised, there are positive signs that pupils have begun to make better progress than in the past.
- Parents and pupils who responded to the inspection questionnaires were positive about the education, care, behaviour and safety of pupils in the school. Results from the staff survey were not as positive, with a significant minority expressing concerns about leadership and other aspects of the school's work. Leaders are aware that the necessary changes implemented to drive improvement since the last inspection have not always been well received and that communication of these changes could have been better at times. They are developing strategies as a team to tackle concerns.
- Leaders have focused particularly on developing the ethos and culture of the school. Their vision of a school in which 'everyone can shine' is clearly promoted and understood by everyone. The 'shine charter' is prominently displayed around the school site and promotes respect, tolerance and compassion. Through Ofsted's online parent questionnaire, Parent View, many parents told inspectors their children have flourished at the school because of the broad curriculum and wide-ranging sporting, musical and artistic opportunities on offer.
- Pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is strongly promoted. Subject leaders have ensured there are well-planned opportunities within their subjects for pupils to broaden their spiritual and cultural understanding. These opportunities are well supplemented through assemblies and on days across the year when the timetable is suspended and pupils engage in different topics, such as the Remembrance Day activities last term. Pupils speak highly of these learning opportunities.
- Leaders are increasingly focusing on strategies to improve the quality and consistency of teaching and learning. They have effective systems in place to hold staff to account for pupils' progress and the quality of their teaching. Leaders have a secure understanding of what aspects of teaching need developing and have focused staff training appropriately. However, leaders' checks to determine the impact of training have focused too heavily on whether staff are complying with policies, rather than on whether their actions are having the necessary impact on pupils' progress.
- Middle and senior leaders share the headteacher's drive for improvement. They evaluate their areas of responsibility and plan improvements effectively. External support has been used to help the drive for better pupil progress in mathematics and English, and the most recent assessment information suggests this has begun to have a positive impact.
- School leaders are aware that examination results last year were below the levels they had predicted. They have taken care this year to secure more accurate assessments. Nevertheless, inspectors found some current assessment information did not correlate well with the standard of work seen in books. Leaders have begun to consider a new model of assessment, in line with the new national curriculum. Further development is required to ensure assessment information is reliable and used well to support planning.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced and provides suitable pathways for pupils of different abilities across each key stage. There are strong arrangements in place to support the transition from primary school and good provision for pupils who enter the school below the expected standard in English and mathematics. These arrangements are helping lower-attaining pupils to catch up. Pupils spoke favourably about the quality of information, advice and guidance they receive. Consequently they are well placed to make informed choices when considering their options at key transition points.
- Leaders have used the pupil premium and Year 7 'catch-up' funding effectively, by providing additional teaching and on strategies designed to keep disadvantaged pupils fully engaged in learning. Last year, the gap between the attainment of disadvantaged pupils and their peers in the school was smaller than that seen nationally. Leaders are aware the gap in attainment for pupils currently in the school varies considerably across year groups. As a result, they are targeting additional support where it is needed most, reflecting the school's commitment to equality of opportunity.
- **The governance of the school**
  - Governors are providing effective strategic oversight of the school. They have a well-developed understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and systematic approaches in place for

holding leaders at all levels to account. They ask probing questions of leaders and tackle key barriers to the school's improvement tenaciously.

- Governors are actively involved in decisions about staff performance. Where they have identified concerns they have made changes. Consequently the school leadership team is now better placed to drive the necessary improvements in the quality of teaching and learning. Governors work with the headteacher to operate the school's robust performance management scheme. They ensure they reward good teaching, but do not support pay progression if it is not warranted.
- Governors manage the school's finances effectively and have good systems in place to check the pupil premium is used appropriately.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The school has good appointment processes in place to check the suitability of adults who work in the school. Staff are well trained in child protection and policies are up to date. Members of staff speak knowledgeably about how to recognise the signs of abuse, neglect or extremism and know what actions to take if they have concerns. Leaders have made the necessary checks on the alternative providers they use to ensure pupils attending are safe and secure.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

## requires improvement

- The quality of teaching across Years 7–11, while improving, remains too variable to support good achievement. New initiatives focused on marking and on the tailoring of work for different abilities are yet to have a consistent impact on the quality of learning. Some teachers require better guidance so that they can refine their practice further. In addition, some pupils still do not respond to the teacher's feedback and do not make the necessary corrections or changes to their work, as the school's policy requires.
- Some teachers do not hold high enough expectations of what pupils can do, particularly of the most able, where work set does not push these pupils on rapidly enough. In a few lessons, pupils with special educational needs were identified in teachers' planning, but were left to get on with the same work as everyone else. However, this was too hard for them.
- Turbulence in staffing in some departments has had a negative impact on pupils' progress. In mathematics for example, some classes have had a number of different teachers across the year. Vacancies in the mathematics department have now been filled. Some of the work provided in key stage 3 fails to promote good progress because it lacks challenge and repeats concepts and methods covered in primary school. In addition, pupils do not have enough opportunities to tackle challenging mathematical problems at key stage 3 and consequently do not build the necessary skills to be successful in GCSE examinations.
- Inspectors saw examples of strong, purposeful teaching which challenged pupils to think deeply. Teaching in science, English, art and modern foreign languages, for example, was generally typified by a brisk pace and good questioning to promote discussion and debate. Teachers ensured pupils understood how new learning built on their previous knowledge and provided criteria to help pupils understand what was required to attain top grades.
- Scrutiny of books from key stage 3 shows systems for setting targets and tracking pupils' progress are not yet sufficiently rigorous. Some pupils do not know their targets and are not clear about what they need to do to improve. Inspectors also found that some assessments were overly generous and gave an inaccurate picture of current attainment levels. As a result, some assessment information is unreliable.
- Teachers set homework regularly and have developed some innovative approaches to make home learning more engaging.
- Most teachers manage behaviour effectively and there is a positive climate for learning across the school. Only when the quality of teaching is weaker do a few pupils drift off task and become restless. The vast majority of pupils concentrate well and respond promptly to instructions. They work well together and are respectful of one another's contributions.
- Learning support assistants provide effective support. They have time allocated to work with teachers so that they understand the topics being taught and the specific learning objectives in lessons. Inspectors observed some support assistants skilfully guiding and prompting pupils through effective questioning.
- The quality of teaching in the sixth form is good and leads to strong and sustained progress on both academic and vocational courses.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare **is good**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. The school's 'shine charter' sets out and exemplifies leaders' ambition to develop the abilities of every pupil, whatever their background and interests. Pupils feel they are valued and well supported. Staff and pupils are proud of their school. Posters, displays and banners around the school site provide highly visual reminders of the school's core values. In addition, the well-designed citizenship curriculum in key stage 3 makes a significant contribution to preparing pupils for life in modern Britain.
- Members of staff promote aspiration and regularly praise and reward the types of behaviour they value. As a result, pupils learn to become active participants in lessons and collaborate effectively with one another to develop their ideas. They are respectful and tolerant of one another both in lessons and at social times.
- Members of the pastoral team are vigilant for any signs of concern and take appropriate steps, often in conjunction with external partners, to safeguard pupils. They have well-developed referral procedures in place. The personal, social, health and economic awareness programme helps pupils to understand different types of risk such as that posed by cyber bullying. Pupils who responded to the online survey said they feel very safe and know how to keep themselves safe.
- Pupils report that bullying and use of derogatory language is rare. The curriculum places a strong emphasis on promoting respect and tolerance, and pupils display an equally strong understanding of the different forms of bullying. Programmes such as 'Be Kind' have had a positive impact and the 'Big Award' recognises the school's work to combat bullying and intervene quickly, should a concern be identified.

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils display positive attitudes to learning in the vast majority of lessons. At social times, pupils move calmly and with purpose around the site and very few are late for lessons. Pupils mix happily with one another and are respectful of the school site. There is virtually no litter and no graffiti on books and folders. All pupils wear the uniform in line with expectations.
- The introduction of 'line up for learning' has enabled year heads to set the tone for the morning and afternoon sessions and promote the school's high expectations for conduct.
- Parents and pupils who responded to the questionnaires indicated they were positive about behaviour and sixth form learners felt the standard of behaviour in the school has improved considerably. However, a significant minority of staff indicated concerns about the management of behaviour. Some felt sanctions are not applied consistently and others raised concerns about very recent changes to policy. Leaders recognise they need to do more to clarify their approach and to support those members of staff who find managing behaviour more difficult.
- The proportion of pupils who receive fixed-term exclusions for poor behaviour has remained slightly higher than the national average, and there have been a small number of permanent exclusions this year. Leaders are in the process of implementing some changes to the behaviour policy. They have recognised that some pupils at risk of exclusion have not received the support needed to help them modify their behaviour and recently introduced alternative approaches have begun to have a positive impact.
- Levels of attendance are below the national average. Focused work to improve attendance has brought about only marginal improvements so far this year. Over the last term targeted work to improve the attendance of disadvantaged pupils has begun to make a difference, although their attendance remains slightly below national figures.
- Pupils who attend alternative provision generally attend well and apply themselves positively to the courses they follow.

## Outcomes for pupils **require improvement**

- Outcomes for pupils are not yet good because the progress they make is too variable in lessons and across subjects.
- With the exception of the current Year 11 cohort, pupils usually enter the school with broadly average levels of ability and leave having made no better than expected progress. Some groups of pupils,

including girls, middle-ability pupils and pupils requiring additional support because of their special educational needs made weaker progress last year.

- Because rates of progress are no better than the national average, the proportion of pupils attaining five good GCSE grades including English and mathematics has been broadly average or below over the last three years. In 2015, with the exception of English, too few pupils gained the higher grades of A\* and A in their GCSE examinations.
- The most-able pupils make less progress than other able pupils nationally, in some subjects. Their progress in mathematics, for example, was significantly less than that made by more-able pupils nationally in 2015. Analysis of the work in the books of pupils currently in the school shows this remains an issue in some subjects, including mathematics.
- Concerted efforts to improve outcomes at key stage 4 are making a positive difference to the previously underperforming groups. Current assessment information shows the proportion of girls on track to attain five or more good GCSE grades including English and mathematics is predicted to be well above that of last year. The gap between girls' and boys' achievement is set to reverse in 2016.
- The gap between the attainment of disadvantaged pupils and other pupils in the school in 2015 was less than that seen nationally. Current assessment information indicates the gap in 2016 is likely to be the same as last year. However, the gap in other year groups varies considerably. For example, in mathematics in Year 9, the gap is unacceptably wide. The progress being made by disadvantaged pupils in the current Year 11 is better than last year in both English and mathematics.
- Pupils who enter the school below the expected level of attainment in English and mathematics receive additional literacy and numeracy support. For many pupils this support is effective and helps them to catch up lost ground.
- Leaders have rationalised the information they gather to track pupils' progress over time. The data they hold shows that the progress of different groups currently in the school is generally improving. Leaders are increasingly able to pinpoint pupils who are making slower progress and provide them with additional support to help them get back on track.
- A relatively small number of pupils have a statement of special educational need or education, health and care plan. As a result, it is difficult to draw conclusions about the attainment and progress year on year. For example, gaps between their performance and that of their peers were narrower than those seen nationally last year, but are predicted to be wider this year. The school's provision for pupils with special educational needs has recently been reviewed and leaders are currently implementing a number of changes in order to drive improvements further.
- The small number of pupils who attend alternative provision complete qualifications in functional mathematics and English together with vocational qualifications. Leaders of the provision report pupils are making good progress towards completing these qualifications.

## 16 to 19 study programmes

are good

- Achievement in the sixth form is good overall. In 2015 outcomes improved on academic courses to be above those seen nationally and strong outcomes have been sustained over recent years on vocational courses. Disadvantaged learners in the sixth form attained outcomes similar to other learners on both academic and vocational courses. Learners currently in the sixth form are making sustained progress in most subjects and are on track to attain standards above the 2015 national averages.
- Pupils who entered the sixth form without at least a GCSE grade C or better in English or mathematics receive further specialist teaching. More than half of those re-entered for examinations improved their grade last year.
- The sixth form is well led and managed, ensuring the requirements of 16–19 study programmes are fully met. Leaders evaluate the quality of provision rigorously and have good plans in place to address identified weaknesses. Good leadership over time has led to an improving trend in learner outcomes.
- The quality of teaching in the sixth form is good and provided some of the strongest examples of effective teaching during the inspection. Sixth form learners spoke favourably of the quality of teaching and support they receive from mentors. Inspectors observed teaching grounded in good subject knowledge that stimulated mature debate and discussion. Most of the work sampled was well presented and marking helped learners to deepen their knowledge and understanding.
- Learners receive good independent careers advice and guidance so that they are placed onto the right study programmes in the sixth form. There is good support available for those learners wishing to apply

to university or apprenticeships. All learners in the sixth form have the opportunity to undertake work experience, which makes a positive contribution to preparing them for future employment.

- There are a broad range of non-qualification activities that develop learners' social, moral, cultural and spiritual understanding. There is a well-devised tutorial programme supplemented by additional events such as the Holocaust Remembrance Day and an anti-extremism day earlier this year. Many learners take on leadership responsibilities; some work alongside members of staff as lunchtime supervisors whilst others play an important role interviewing prospective candidates for teaching posts. Attendance in the sixth form is above the national average, reflecting the positive ethos and very good behaviour seen among sixth form learners.
- The overwhelming majority of learners complete their study programme and progress to their chosen destinations in higher education, apprenticeship or employment.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	137898
<b>Local authority</b>	Gateshead
<b>Inspection number</b>	10012072

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Comprehensive
<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 16 to 19 study programmes</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1,010
<b>Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes</b>	154
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mike Jones
<b>Headteacher</b>	Heather Scott
<b>Telephone number</b>	0191 442 2000
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.josephswan.org.uk">www.josephswan.org.uk</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:enquiries@josephswan.org.uk">enquiries@josephswan.org.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	30 April 2014 – 1 May 2014

## Information about this school

- Joseph Swan Academy is larger than the average-sized secondary school and has a sixth form.
- Most pupils are White British.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium is well above average. The pupil premium is additional government funding provided for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals or children who are looked after.
- The proportion of pupils with disability and those with special educational needs is average.
- The school entered some pupils early for GCSE examinations in English last year. It has not done so this year.
- A small number of pupils in Year 11 attend Resources North East and In Learning, a local authority-run alternative provision, on a full-time basis.
- The school meets the government's current floor targets, which are the minimum expectation for pupils' attainment and progress.
- There have been a number of changes to the membership of the senior leadership team since the last inspection.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 33 part-lessons, of which a number were undertaken jointly with senior leaders. During lesson observations, inspectors sampled pupils' books and talked to pupils in order to evaluate the quality of current work. Inspectors also attended form time and undertook a number of shorter visits to lessons to gauge the climate for learning and pupils' behaviour.
- Inspectors scrutinised in detail a larger sample of pupils' mathematics, English and science books in order to assess the progress pupils had made across the year.
- Inspectors observed the climate around the school site during break and lunchtimes and during the transitions between lessons.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher and other senior leaders, groups of middle leaders, teachers, the chair of governors and three other members of the governing body, a member of the Parents' Forum and representatives of the local authority. In addition, inspectors held discussions with groups of pupils.
- An inspector visited In Learning, an alternative provision run by the local authority. Currently, five pupils from the school attend the provision on a full-time basis.
- Inspectors visited the school's provision for pupils who exhibit more challenging behaviour which included the Lodge, the Bridge and the standards room.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documents including school policies, assessment information, records of checks on the quality of teaching and the school's own self-evaluation. The minutes of governing body meetings and a range of safeguarding information were also scrutinised.
- The inspection team took account of the 76 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and to the 88 responses to the staff survey and 87 responses to the pupil survey.
- Inspectors were aware during this inspection that serious allegations of a child protection nature were being investigated by the appropriate authorities. While Ofsted does not have the power to investigate allegations of this kind, actions taken by the setting in response to the allegations were considered, where appropriate, alongside the other evidence available at the time of the inspection to inform inspectors' judgements.

## Inspection team

Chris Smith, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Margaret Farrow	Her Majesty's Inspector
Lynn Kenworthy	Ofsted Inspector
John McNally	Ofsted Inspector

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