

Inspection of St Joseph's Catholic High School

Shaggy Calf Lane, Slough, Berkshire SL2 5HW

Inspection dates: 10 and 11 May 2022

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Sixth-form provision **Good**

Previous inspection grade Good

What is it like to attend this school?

At the very heart of St Joseph's Catholic High School is a vision to unlock belief in all. Aspiration, ambition and determination are deeply rooted within the school. A feeling of warmth and love permeates St Joseph's. As the headteacher told the lead inspector: 'We have to love our children, but more importantly they have to know that they are loved.'

Pupils are happy and smiley and enjoy coming to school. They feel a sense of belonging. One pupil explained to the lead inspector that he had moved from another school and was welcomed with open arms. Pupils treat each other, staff and visitors with respect. Positive attitudes and a motivation to learn characterise pupils' behaviour. Instances of unkind behaviour or language are rare. Swift action taken by staff quickly nips these things in the bud. As a result, pupils feel well looked after and cared for.

Opportunities for pupils to participate in clubs and the Duke of Edinburgh scheme help to develop their talents and interests. Pupils are keen to make a difference to others by raising money for charity and exploring environmental issues. Talks from visitors help to broaden pupils' horizons and hear about stories of success.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Setting the tone of the school are a highly committed headteacher and senior leadership team who have high expectations of themselves, staff and pupils. Working together and empowering others are important ways through which they bring the school's vision to life.

Leaders have developed a curriculum that ensures that pupils study a broad range of subjects. They have set out what it is that they want pupils to learn and know how to do in every subject from Years 7 to 13 so that pupils' knowledge and skills gradually build over time. There is an ambition for all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), to achieve as much as possible. For example, high numbers of pupils are entered for the English Baccalaureate.

Many approaches are used in the classroom to ensure that pupils make progress. For example, teachers are asked to ensure that pupils revisit learning from previous topics or years at the start of their lessons. This helps to lodge these bits of learning in pupils' long-term memories. However, many of these approaches are not consistently used by teachers and there is variation between departments. The way departments are led varies and senior leaders know that they need to do more to ensure consistency between heads of departments.

High expectations of pupils pave the way for a calm, purposeful and inclusive learning environment. This leads to positive behaviour in lessons. Rising to the challenge, most pupils are motivated to do well and take pride in their work. This is

particularly the case in the sixth form where students' attitudes are highly positive. In key stages 3 and 4, pupils listen attentively to teachers, but there are sometimes a lack of opportunities for them to develop thinking skills and independence. Staff have an excellent understanding of pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils with SEND make similar progress to other pupils. Some subtle but very effective strategies are used to support these pupils.

Staff take the personal development of pupils seriously. They are committed to ensuring that pupils become learned and wise and that they are prepared well for the future. The school's personal, social and health education programme is very well thought out. During their time at St Joseph's, pupils learn about a whole host of topics, for example healthy relationships and how to stay safe. They learn about their own faith and others too. A planned careers programme ensures that pupils have opportunities to learn about different career pathways.

The headteacher and other senior leaders know St Joseph's very well. They have put a lot of actions in place to further improve the school. However, they accept that they need to develop how well they evaluate the school's strengths and priorities for improvement so that their action planning is much more precise and focused.

A healthy partnership between school and multi-academy trust leaders, members of the local academy committee and the Diocese of Northampton supports the continuous development of St Joseph's. School leaders are held to account through regular challenge and support.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Relationships are key at St Joseph's and staff develop very positive relationships with pupils so that they understand what is going on for them and their families. This means that they spot possible causes for concern quickly. Staff are trained well and know how to report any concerns they have to leaders. Swift action on the school's part often leads to other agencies providing more support for pupils and their families. Leaders do not shy away from challenging other agencies when things are not happening quickly enough for pupils. Records of concerns are incredibly detailed, as are the actions the school takes.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The approaches used to teach the planned curriculum are inconsistent across departments. This slows the progress pupils make in their learning. Leaders should ensure that the implementation of the curriculum is consistent in all departments.

- Middle leaders are keen to play their role in the school's development. However, checking and monitoring the implementation of the curriculum are at an early stage of development. However, leaders have already begun work to strengthen middle leadership. Leaders should continue to support the development of middle leaders in the school.
- Leaders' self-evaluation is not evaluative enough. This means that the school's strengths and priorities for improvement are not as clear as they could be. This leads to a lack of focus about what it is that needs to improve. As a result, leaders' action plans are not as precise as they need to be. Leaders should ensure that they strengthen self-evaluation and action planning processes.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	143803
Local authority	Slough
Inspection number	10200904
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	982
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	201
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Catherine Davies
Headteacher	Ciran Stapleton
Website	www.st-josephs.slough.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	4 December 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- St Joseph's Catholic High School is a school within the St Thomas Catholic Academies Trust.
- The last section 48 inspection took place on 26 and 27 November 2018.
- The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.
- The school uses one registered alternative provision provider.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, drama, geography and physical education. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also reviewed curriculum planning and visited lessons in some other subjects, including maths and science.
- Inspectors met with leaders, staff, pupils and those with responsibility for governance, including the multi-academy trust's board of trustees, the chief executive officer and the chair of the local academy committee.
- Inspectors held discussions with one registered alternative provision provider.
- Inspectors visited the sixth-form provision and spoke to a group of sixth-form students, as well as the head of the sixth form. They visited sixth-form lessons.
- Inspectors observed registration, assemblies and lunch and break and times.
- Inspectors scrutinised behaviour and bullying records.
- Inspectors scrutinised local academy committee meeting minutes and records of visits to the school made by members of the committee. Inspectors scrutinised a safeguarding audit that had been carried out by an external consultant commissioned by the multi-academy trust.
- Inspectors met with the special education needs coordinator to discuss the provision for pupils with SEND. They visited lessons to look at the support these pupils were receiving.
- Inspectors considered the responses to the confidential staff survey. They took account of the responses to Ofsted's Parent View and comments made by those who responded.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors looked at the school's website and policies, met with leaders and spoke with pupils and staff. They scrutinised school records of the safeguarding checks carried out on adults working at the school and spoke with local academy committee members. They scrutinised a selection of electronic child protection records.

Inspection team

Shaun Jarvis, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Paul Gibson	Ofsted Inspector
Christopher Doherty	Ofsted Inspector
Julie Summerfield	Ofsted Inspector

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