

Inspection of a good school: St Joseph's Catholic College

Ocotal Way, Swindon, Wiltshire SN3 3LR

Inspection dates:

7 and 8 November 2023

Outcome

St Joseph's Catholic College continues to be a good school.

The principal of this school is Jerry Giles. This school is part of St Joseph's Catholic College Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Jessica Higgins.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils and staff are proud to be members of St Joseph's Catholic College and welcome visitors with enthusiasm. Relationships between adults and pupils are warm and respectful. This means that pupils feel safe and supported at the school. The school is ambitious for all pupils to achieve well academically and develop their own personal character. The religious ethos of the school runs thorough all that the school does.

Pupils behave well in lessons and understand that disruptive behaviour has consequences. When pupils' behaviour falls below expectations, adults act. Most pupils understand the importance of being respectful towards others, but bullying does occur. When pupils report incidents, adults help to resolve them.

Pupils contribute to the leadership of the school. They act as prefects, members of the chaplaincy group and student council representatives. Pupils work towards the 'St Joseph the Worker Award'. This recognises the extracurricular activities that pupils take part in and their commitment towards their learning. Pupils learn to be active citizens and support the wider community. For example, the 'SVP group' fundraise to provide food parcels and organise community events.

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

The school has developed an ambitious curriculum for pupils. They can study a broad range of qualifications that prepares them well for further study. While pupils can study all the English Baccalaureate subjects to GCSE, only a small number currently do so. The school is considering how to increase the number of pupils choosing to study modern foreign languages at key stage 4.

Pupils recall their learning well over time. They can make links to their previous learning and generally take pride in their work. Pupils learn what makes each subject distinctive. Assessment used in lessons does not always identify the gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding. This means that some pupils do not learn the curriculum as well as they might.

The school curriculum sets out the most important knowledge that pupils should gain in each subject. However, sometimes, the curriculum is not adapted well to enable all pupils, regardless of their needs, to securely learn more over time. The school identifies accurately the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The St Aquinas SEND unit supports pupils to study a range of qualifications that are appropriate to their future ambitions.

The school values reading. It identifies the weakest readers and the individual reasons for their reading difficulties. These pupils are well supported to both catch up and keep up with their peers. The school encourages pupils to read for pleasure. The school has a well-resourced library space and hosts events such as author visits and local literary festivals. Pupils read a wide range of texts through the school tutor reading programme. This develops pupils' confidence with reading as well as their wider cultural understanding.

The curriculum offered by the school extends well beyond the academic for all year groups. The school has set out the memorable experiences that pupils will receive during their five years at the school. A series of activity days develop pupils' talents, interests and cultural awareness. Pupils enjoy these experiences.

Pupils follow an age-appropriate personal, social and health education curriculum. Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe, including online. The school supports pupils to look after their physical and mental health. Pupils engage with local employers to understand the world of work. The school provides impartial careers advice, including information about higher education and apprenticeships. Pupils are well prepared to make decisions about their future.

The school recognises the importance of good attendance. Most pupils attend school well. Staff work successfully with families and other agencies to support those who are persistently absent to re-engage with school life. This work is enabling more pupils to regularly attend school.

The school's leadership team is considerate of staff well-being. Staff appreciate the changes that have reduced their workload and created a 'one team' approach to school improvement.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Teachers' use of assessment is, occasionally, not precise enough. In some cases, learning is moved on before pupils have grasped the foundational knowledge that they need. In other cases, pupils are not introduced to new content quickly enough. The trust should ensure that assessment supports teachers to accurately evaluate pupils' current understanding of the curriculum.
- The curriculum is sometimes not adapted successfully to enable all pupils to securely learn the key content. As a result, some pupils are unable to grasp concepts and do not learn the curriculum as well as they might. The trust should ensure that the pedagogies used to implement the curriculum are matched to the needs of all pupils.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in November 2014.

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.

Further information

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

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	136980
Local authority	Swindon
Inspection number	10288176
Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,409
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Jessica Higgins
Principal	Jerry Giles
Website	www.stjosephscollege.net
Date of previous inspection	9 January 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- This is a Catholic school in the Diocese of Clifton. A canonical inspection was carried out in December 2018. These inspections are normally carried out every 5 years.
- This school uses one registered alternative provider and one unregistered alternative provider.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors held discussions with school leaders at all levels. Inspectors also met staff and trustees.

- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: mathematics, science, physical education and modern foreign languages. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors viewed a range of school documentation, including minutes of the trustee meetings, the school's self-evaluation and its development plan.
- Inspectors met with the special educational needs coordinator and reviewed plans that support pupils with SEND.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors considered responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, as well as responses to the staff survey and pupil survey.

Inspection team

Sara Berry, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Gary Lewis

Ofsted Inspector

Tom Hill

Ofsted Inspector

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