



St Joseph's RC Voluntary Aided Comprehensive School

**Better
education
and care**

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number 108735
LEA South Tyneside

Inspection number 274854
Inspection dates 26 – 27 April 2005
Reporting inspector Joan McKenna

Inspection deemed to have been carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996 according to section 12(3) of the same act.

Type of School	Comprehensive	School address	Mill Lane
School category	Voluntary Aided		Hebburn
Age range of pupils	11 - 18		Tyne and Wear NE31 2ET
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0191 421 2828
Number on roll	1510	Fax number	0191 421 0531
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr T Carney
Date of previous inspection	2 – 5 October 2000	Headteacher	Dr J Campbell

Age group	Published	Reference no.
11 - 18	May 2005	274854

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Introduction

The inspection was a pilot of the new arrangements for inspection announced by Ofsted in its consultation paper of February 2004. It was carried out with the support and co-operation of the staff of St Joseph's RC Voluntary Aided Comprehensive School and of the local education authority.

The inspection was carried out by five additional inspectors.

Description of the school

St Joseph's is a large Roman Catholic comprehensive school. It caters for 1510 girls and boys, aged 11-18. There are almost 400 students in the very large sixth form. The great majority of pupils are of White British heritage, with only a very small number from minority ethnic groups, all of whom speak English fluently. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is similar to most schools, and the proportion with learning difficulties and disabilities is lower than in most schools. The school has specialist technology college status, is a Leading Edge school, a local education authority leading school for engineering and has recently gained Investors in People Status.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

St Joseph's is an extremely effective school. Almost all areas of practice are good and many are outstanding. It is rightly held in high regard by parents and pupils. All groups of pupils achieve very well and by the age of 16 reach high standards. Teaching is good overall and much is very good, although pupils are not always actively enough involved in their learning. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are exemplary, and play a key part in them achieving so well. Pupils' work and progress is checked very well and they receive good help on how to improve. The curriculum and the wide range of enrichment activities meet the needs of pupils very well. Pupils receive an outstanding quality of care and support, and the school works very closely with external organisations in providing this. The school is exceptionally well led and managed. Self evaluation is comprehensive, thorough and accurate. There is an excellent capacity to improve, as shown by the very good rate of progress since the last inspection. The school provides good value for money.

Grade: 1

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

The very popular sixth form provides a good quality of education. It is very inclusive, and there is a strong commitment to enabling all students who wish to attend to do so. As a result, students' starting points are lower overall than is often the case on entering Year 12. Students achieve well, however and reach average standards by the end of Year 13. They are positive, mature and confident. The curriculum is very good, with an increasing range of courses to meet students' needs. Teaching is good overall but not as consistently so as in the main school and lesson planning is not always of a high standard. Students in the sixth form receive good quality support and advice, although sixth form managers do not always have a comprehensive overview of their progress. Leadership and management are good overall. Managers generally carry out their roles well, but there is not enough integration of academic and pastoral support. Senior managers of the school have a very good understanding of the strengths and areas for development in the sixth form and are taking action to improve its effectiveness to ensure that it is of the same high standard as the rest of the school.

Grade: 2

What the school should do to improve further

The most important things that the school should do to ensure that all areas of its work are of a similarly high standard are:

- take further action to improve the effectiveness of the sixth form, especially aspects of leadership and management
- improve the planning of lessons for pupils of all ages, with an emphasis on ensuring that that pupils are actively involved in their learning.

Achievement and standards

Pupils achieve extremely well during Years 7 to 11. They enter the school with standards just a little above the national average and they attain well above average standards in national tests at the age of 14 and in GCSE examinations at the age of 16. Results are generally well above those of similar schools. Standards in most subjects are above or well above average, with the latest examination results particularly high in French and design and technology. Only in history and English literature were they below average. Test and examination results are rising faster than they are nationally. These standards represent outstanding progress. All groups of pupils achieve equally well with no significant difference between girls and boys, different ethnic groups, prior attainment or pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities.

The inclusive policy of enrolment into the sixth form results in standards on entry being lower than those usually found. Consequently, A level results at the end of Year 13 are only in line with the national average overall, with girls' results slightly higher than boys. However, students achieve well overall in relation to their starting points, with many exceeding their targets. There is greater variation between achievement in different subjects than in the rest of the school, but areas where results are below average, such as English and history, are being effectively tackled.

Grade: 1

Personal development and well-being

Pupils' attitudes, behaviour and almost all aspects of their personal development are exemplary and make a very significant contribution to their successful achievement. Pupils enjoy attending St Joseph's, as shown by their well above average attendance and their enthusiastic and committed approach to all on offer. There is a strong mutual respect between teachers and pupils.

Great emphasis is placed on ensuring that every child feels important and results in them feeling valued, well cared for, safe and having high levels of self-esteem. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Pupils have a strong concern for social justice and exercise responsibility well both personally and on behalf of others. They engage in a wide range of activities beyond the classroom, such as clubs and trips, locally, nationally and internationally, developing confidence which helps them to prepare effectively for life in the wider world. Healthy living and eating is promoted, although pupils are not yet responding fully to the choices available to them. The school council works tirelessly to represent the views of pupils. Pupils feel well consulted as a result, while recognising that it takes time to make changes. All of the above is equally true of sixth form students. They are confident, mature and enjoy their membership of the sixth form very much. They are very positive role models for younger pupils, whom they help voluntarily in a variety of ways.

Grade: 1

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Teaching across the school is good overall, with much that is very good. Teachers have secure subject knowledge which they use well to engage pupils and provide good explanations of work. Teachers have high expectations of pupils' work and conduct, to which pupils respond very well. They have exceptionally good attitudes towards their learning, are keen to succeed and put great effort into their work, and this helps them achieve successfully. Many teachers employ a good range of strategies to help pupils learn, although some do not ensure that pupils are involved actively enough in lessons, which affects their progress. Specialist support for pupils with learning difficulties is very good. The needs of different groups of pupils more generally are well catered for overall, but in some lessons, activities and the way in which they are taught are not modified enough to take account of the full range of needs. This is partly because lesson planning has weaknesses. Some is detailed, but the quality is inconsistent, especially in the sixth form.

Pupils' achievement in lessons is regularly assessed, and they receive good feedback on how they are doing and how to improve their work. The progress they make over time is very thoroughly monitored by academic and pastoral staff working together and effective action is taken to ensure that pupils are on course to meet their targets. This is less effective in the sixth form.

Grade: 2

Curriculum and other activities

The formal curriculum and additional enrichment activities provide a rich and rewarding experience for pupils and students throughout the school. Alongside the wide range of traditional academic courses offered, there is a good number of applied GCSE and vocational courses to suit the needs of pupils in Years 10 and 11 and an increasing range offered in the sixth form. Pupils are given clear guidance on choice of courses. Work related learning is very well delivered, with industry days and attention to pupils' financial education. There are very well developed programmes for promoting pupils' personal development, including healthy lifestyles. Extensive opportunities for support and learning outside of the school day are provided, with, for example, the library very well used for voluntary, supervised private study. Participation in the wide range of extra-curricular activities offered is high and positive. Arising out of the popular debating society, for example, a sixth form youth council has won both national and international competitions.

Grade: 1

Care, guidance and support

The school provides an outstanding level of care and support for pupils. There is particularly good support for pupils with special needs or facing specific challenges. Child protection procedures are rigorously implemented and whole-school health and safety procedures are in place, with more detailed subject practice being developed. The monitoring of pupils' academic and personal development is very thorough, resulting in specific support being provided to all pupils, the effectiveness of which is regularly evaluated. Careers education and guidance is excellent, helping pupils to make well informed decisions about their future. Very successful links with local employers and partner institutions contribute to a good work experience programme.

Grade: 1

Leadership and management

The school is exceptionally well led and managed. The headteacher and senior leadership team are extremely committed to ensuring the very best for pupils in every respect, and give clear direction to the school community. A drive for continual improvement, efficient management systems and effective curriculum and pastoral leaders help ensure success. Self evaluation is comprehensive and thorough, resulting in detailed and accurate knowledge of the school. Well targeted action promotes good improvement, with rigorous evaluation of the

impact of developments. Despite the high quality of practice within the school, there is no hint of complacency. Staff are respected and valued, but challenged to give of their best on behalf of pupils. Leadership and management of the sixth form are good overall, but not as effective as in the rest of the school. Some aspects of practice, such as the use of assessment data, are not as efficient as they could be.

Governors understand their role well and support and challenge the school appropriately. Views of stakeholders are valued, sought and acted upon. Very good relationships with an extensive range of external agencies and with parents are used to support pupils very well. St Joseph's works closely with other schools to share and develop good practice. Resources are well managed to maximum benefit.

Grade: 1

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INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

Key to judgements: Grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate.	School Overall	16-19
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OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	* 1	* 2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	n/a	n/a
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	Yes
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

ACHIEVEMENT AND STANDARDS

How well do learners achieve?	* 1	2
The <i>standards</i> reached by learners	1	3
How well learners' make <i>progress</i> , taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1	1

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND WELL-BEING

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	* 1	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	1
The behaviour of learners	1	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community.	1	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	1

THE QUALITY OF PROVISION

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	* 2	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	* 1	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	* 1	1
How well does the provision promote the well-being of learners?	* 1	1

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	*	
	1	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	1	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	1
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	2
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	Yes

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	Yes/No/NA
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are taught about sexual health risks	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe.	Yes/No/NA
Procedures for Child Protection meet the requirements of <i>Working Together to Safeguard Children</i>	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
How well learners enjoy and achieve	Yes/No/NA
Support is given to learners with poor behaviour and attendance	Yes
Learners' personal and academic development are monitored	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	Yes/No/NA
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, are consulted when key decisions affecting them have to be made and their views are listened to	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	Yes/No/NA
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop their enterprise and financial skills, and work in teams	Yes
Education and training for all learners in 14-19 is co-ordinated to give experience of work based learning	Yes

Alexandra House T 0207 421 6800
33 Kingsway F 0207 421 6707
London WC2B 6SE www.ofsted.gov.uk



St Joseph's RC Voluntary Aided Comprehensive School
Mill Lane
Hebburn
Tyne & Wear
NE31 2ET

28th April 2005

Dear pupils and students,

Following our visit to inspect your school we would like to thank you for the valuable contributions many of you made in helping us with our work. Every inspector was very impressed with your positive attitudes and very good behaviour. We were also pleased to learn that you enjoy school and find most of your work interesting.

You will no doubt have heard that we enjoyed our visit and found your school to be outstanding. It is clear that nearly all of you in the main school make very good progress and produce work that is well above the average. Those of you in the sixth form achieve well and, overall, your work is in line with the national average. Your sixth form is good and in some areas is very good, although we think it could be even better.

We believe that your school is a safe place to be and that a wide range of very effective arrangements make sure that each and everyone of you is important and treated individually. The range of courses and activities outside normal lesson times available to you is wide and helps to meet your own special interests and needs. You are fully supported and get high quality guidance throughout your education at St. Joseph's, as well as good advice about your future after you leave school.

The adults in your school care greatly about your well being and work very hard in doing their best for you. You enjoy the benefits of good teaching and you respond very well because of your very good attitudes to learning. Much of the teaching you experience is exceptionally good, and never less than satisfactory. In order to make this even better, one of the key issues for school improvement is to raise lesson planning to a consistently high standard in all areas so that you are more actively involved in all lessons and the work you are asked to do fits in with the range of your different needs.

We want you to know that all the praiseworthy things about you and your school are because of the mutual respect shown between you and your teachers and because your school is very well led. Plans are already in place to make your school even better and we would like to congratulate you, knowing that you have every reason to be confident of your future at St. Joseph's.

Yours sincerely

J. McKenna (Lead Inspector)