



# St Joseph's Catholic High School

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 110087  
**LEA** Slough LEA  
**Inspection number** 278368  
**Inspection dates** 22 February 2006 to 23 February 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Lynn Bappa AI

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Modern (non-selective)	<b>School address</b>	Shaggy Calf Lane
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided		Slough
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 16		SL2 5HW
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01753 524713
<b>Number on roll</b>	621	<b>Fax number</b>	01753 579128
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	Rev Frank Shephard
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	29 January 2001	<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr James Welsh

<b>Age group</b> 11 to 16	<b>Inspection dates</b> 22 February 2006 - 23 February 2006	<b>Inspection number</b> 278368
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by four Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

St Joseph's is a smaller-than-average and over-subscribed Catholic school within a selective system. Most students are Catholic but the school welcomes children from other faiths. The percentages of minority ethnic students and those with English as an additional language are above average. The main languages spoken in the school, excluding English, are Polish, Urdu and Shona. The proportion of students with learning difficulties is just above average. There has been very high staff turnover in recent years but staffing is now stable.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

St Joseph's is a good school with outstanding features. It offers a well-rounded education. It gives good value for money and has good capacity to improve further. The school's view of its effectiveness is accurate and takes good account of the views of parents and students. Standards have risen significantly in Years 7 to 9 and these students made exceptional academic progress last year. Standards in Years 10 and 11 have been too low but are now rising. Work in students' books and in lessons shows that they now make good progress. The strong emphasis on students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development means that their personal development is outstanding. The curriculum is designed effectively to meet the needs of learners. The curriculum provided for creative subjects is strong. The range of vocational courses provided in Years 10 and 11 is narrow, although the school sensibly plans to widen this provision. Although classroom teaching is good overall, some of the work provided for students who spend part of their time in the Learning Support Unit lacks imagination and challenge. The school cares well for its students.

### What the school should do to improve further

\* Continue to improve standards in Years 10 and 11.\* Improve the quality of the provision for pupils in the Learning Support Unit.\* Continue to broaden vocational opportunities.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 2

Standards at St Joseph's are getting better because the school is constantly seeking to help the students to do as well as they can. A strong emphasis is placed on raising students' self-esteem so that they are ready to learn. Students enter the school with attainment levels that are well below average. Direct and robust action is taken to ensure that they make the levels of progress of which they are capable. As a consequence, standards in the national tests for 14 year olds have risen for the last two years, although they are still below average overall. Indeed, the 2005 results showed that students made exceptional academic progress compared to their low starting points, particularly in English where standards are now well above average. Standards at GCSE were well below average in 2005 and students made inadequate progress. However, school data indicates that the percentage of students who gain five or more good GCSE passes is expected to double this year. Inspection evidence supports this and confirms that students in Years 10 and 11 are now achieving well. Minority ethnic students and those who have English as an additional language make good progress. Students with learning difficulties make good progress overall. However, the small number of students who spend part of their time in the Learning Support Unit do not always make good enough progress while they are there because the work provided for them does not consistently challenge or motivate them. The school met challenging targets for 14 year olds because of the exceptional progress

made by the students. Although targets in the 2005 GCSE examinations were not met, the school is on track to meet them this year.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 1**

Personal development is outstanding. A strong Catholic ethos underpins school life. Students feel safe and welcomed from the start, despite the fact that many arrive with low confidence and self-esteem. Their very good attitudes in lessons have a positive impact on their achievement throughout the school. As pupils in Year 7 say 'We really like school, it's fun.' They behave well and there have been no permanent exclusions for two years. Bullying is infrequent as learners are taught to respect the dignity and worth of others. Students enjoy coming to school. Attendance levels have improved significantly since the last inspection and are now close to the national average. There is a very strong emphasis on spiritual development, evident in the respect and thoughtfulness shown towards others. Students show a very good understanding of right and wrong. Relationships are outstanding with students from all backgrounds and cultures mixing together happily in lessons and around the school. They enjoy physical activities and show a very good awareness of healthy lifestyles. Students are fully involved in all aspects of school life. Many assume roles of responsibility and they exert effective influence through the school council. There is a strong respect for other cultures and beliefs. The school recently hosted a Polish lunch, for example, and Muslim students appreciate having a quiet place to pray. Students are well prepared to make a good contribution to working life in the future.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teaching is good across the school. The drive to improve teaching and learning, and thereby raise standards of achievement, is at the heart of what the school is trying to do. The impact has been felt more strongly in Years 7 to 9 because students there have benefited from a longer period of staffing stability. Teachers know their subjects well and form very strong relationships with students, helping them to gain in confidence and achieve well. Careful planning means that teachers engage their students well. They encourage them to work co-operatively as well as independently. Students show good attitudes to learning, and relationships in the classroom are exemplary. The best lessons seen were full of challenge and sparkle. This was seen in a Year 8 drama lesson where students skilfully explored the language of Romeo and Juliet. The use of assessment to support learning is good; students know how well they are doing and how to improve their work. The use of homework to support learning is good in many subjects but is set inconsistently.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 3**

At the time of the last inspection, the curriculum was unsatisfactory. There were no vocational courses, for example, and not all students studied information and communications technology (ICT). It has improved in significant areas since then and is now better matched to learners' needs. The school makes good provision for literacy and numeracy skills. A small number of students in Years 10 and 11, however, still do not take a qualification in ICT or do not receive a consistent course of study in it through their other subjects. The school provides a satisfactory range of courses for students in Years 10 and 11. Students appreciate the widening range of options available and receive good guidance when making choices. There are courses in subjects such as child development and applied business as well as a Skills Force programme using qualifications such as the Duke of Edinburgh Award and St John's Ambulance First Aid Certificate. A small number of students receive flexible off-site provision. The range of vocational courses provided in Years 10 and 11 is still narrow, however, although the school sensibly plans to widen this provision. The creative arts curriculum is strong. The school works with institutions such as the Royal Opera House to teach students how to write and perform operas. A recent project involved the creation of a visual diary by students consisting of hundreds of photos showing the life of the school. These are impressively displayed in the corridors. There is strong take-up in the excellent provision of extra-curricular and enrichment activities ranging from salsa classes to religious retreats. These help to motivate students and add to their enjoyment of school whilst teaching skills in enterprise and working in a team. The Learning Support Unit has been set up to meet the needs of a small but diverse group of students with behavioural difficulties who may be in danger of exclusion. Provision is flexible and the unit operates a 'revolving door' policy. Not all students benefit consistently from their time there, however. Some do not understand why they are there and how the unit will help them. Some of the work they are given does not involve or challenge them.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

The school cares well for its students. They are well supported through the pastoral system. They know that if they need help it is always there. They have access to a nurse for health concerns and a professional counsellor is available to support students in need. Child protection procedures and practice are robust. The school works well in partnership with parents and others. Learners are guided well in choosing subjects and courses, in preparing for studies beyond school and for future employment. Reports to parents are clear and valuable in setting straightforward improvement targets for each subject.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 1

The school's aims are very clear. Whilst students' personal development is a very strong focus, this is not at the expense of their academic achievement. The very significant improvement in the national test results for 14 year olds and the more recent improvements seen in Years 10 and 11 are a direct result of the excellent leadership of the headteacher. He sets very high expectations and is a very effective leader who is strongly supported by everyone in the school. Teachers told inspectors that he 'inspires confidence'. He knows the school's strengths and weaknesses very well and this is evident in the high quality of the school's self-evaluation. This is comprehensive and rigorous, clearly identifying strengths and weaknesses. Monitoring systems are very effective and senior leaders and subject heads make very good use of performance data to improve standards. The recent and successful drive to raise the standards of pupils in English is an example of best practice. The school is very well placed to continue its successes and develop them further. Since the appointment of the current headteacher, the staffing situation has been stable. Prior to this, there had been a period of high staff turnover. The senior leadership team has been effectively re-organised. Governors have a good grasp of the school's strengths and weaknesses and provide a very effective balance of support and challenge to the school. The excellent personal development of the students is a result of strong pastoral leadership at all levels. There is a very strong commitment towards valuing every student. Staff, parents and students are rightly proud of this aspect of school life. One parent commented that she felt honoured that her children go to St Joseph's. The opinions of parents and students are always valued and frequently acted upon. The school works extremely well with a wide range of partners, including the Church, neighbouring schools, and organisations such as Creative Partnerships. Issues relating to the last inspection have been tackled very successfully. There are robust systems in place to ensure efficient management on a day-to-day basis.

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## Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

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

### Achievement and standards

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

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	1	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	3	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	NA

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	2	NA
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	3	NA
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	2	NA

<sup>1</sup> Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

**Leadership and management**

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

<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy</b>	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
<b>The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe</b>	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
<b>The extent to which learners make a positive contribution</b>	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being</b>	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	Yes
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	Yes

### **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

I am writing on behalf of the inspection team to let you know the judgments we made about your school when we visited recently. Thank you for making us so welcome. We found it a pleasure to meet and talk with you and to observe your learning in lessons and around the school. We were particularly impressed by the photos you took as part of your Visual Diary.

We believe that your school is a good school with some excellent features. The school helps you make good progress by teaching you well and helping you to become independent and confident learners. As a result, standards at St Joseph's are improving. Your headteacher is an excellent leader who has your best interests at heart and is well supported by everyone in the school. You say you are proud of your school and you feel well supported by teachers and other staff. You behave in a mature and considerate way around the school and in lessons. You share well in decision-making through the school council. We were very impressed by your values and by the quality of your relationships.

We think you are getting a good all-round education. We have, however, asked the school to do a few things in order to make it even better. We agree that teachers should continue to raise standards at GCSE. We agree with them that plans to improve the number of courses for students in Years 10 and 11 are a good idea. We also think that some of the work given to those of you who attend the learning support unit could be more challenging and a bit more exciting.