

# St Joseph's College

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	101820
<b>Local Authority</b>	Croydon
<b>Inspection number</b>	307825
<b>Inspection dates</b>	8–9 October 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Anne Feltham HMI

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Boys
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	1032
Sixth form	160
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Brian O'Donohoe
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Eamon Connolly
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	24 January 2005
<b>School address</b>	Beulah Hill Upper Norwood London SE19 3HL
<b>Telephone number</b>	020 8761 1426
<b>Fax number</b>	020 8761 7667

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<b>Age group</b>	11–18
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

St Joseph's College is a voluntary-aided Catholic school for boys. It has specialist college status in mathematics and computing. It is situated within the diocese of Southwark, has trust status and is long-established. It is a popular, average-sized school with a small sixth form which offers courses to boys and girls. 10% of students are selected in Year 7 on the basis of their aptitude in information and communication technology (ICT). Students' attainment on entry to the school ranges from average to above average. Students come from a rich variety of heritages, with the majority from Black and minority ethnic backgrounds and around a fifth with first languages other than English. There are fewer students than the national average who experience learning difficulties and/or disabilities and fewer who are eligible for free school meals. The school population is a stable one. Students come from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds, with many living in areas of higher than average deprivation.

## 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 College is a good school, which overall provides an effective education for its students. The school is inclusive and diverse. Whilst its identity is rooted in its Catholic core values, it welcomes students from a range of different faiths. This results in an ethos in which students with different beliefs and home languages, and from different ethnic and cultural communities work together in harmony. They thrive in the school, enjoy good relationships with their peers and make good progress. They learn to respect and value each other's differences. This is a significant strength of the school.

Students achieve well over time in the main school, and attain very good results, particularly in the core subjects of mathematics, English and science. Students' achievement and standards in mathematics are outstanding. The school identified underachievement in science, and effective intervention has now resulted in rapidly rising standards at all levels. Standards in the foundation subjects are improving, although the school recognises that it has some way to go in raising standards in languages, design and technology and the humanities.

Students have many opportunities which enable them to prepare well for their future lives; for example in sports - where involvement in a new rugby initiative is involving wider groups of boys - and in the performing arts. The college's wide range of activities in the specialist areas of mathematics and ICT enable students to work beyond the immediate school community, for example supporting primary pupils. Recognising that too few students were continuing with a foreign language beyond Year 9, and that this was threatening their future economic well-being, the school has introduced Mandarin Chinese for all students in Years 7 and 8, with examination groups for older students. Students gain accreditation in Chinese and have been involved in various visits and projects. Community cohesion is good, and has the clear potential to become outstanding, as current initiatives develop and the school monitors and evaluates outcomes further.

Senior leaders, including governors, have created a caring, energetic community in which students gain progressively in confidence as they move through the school. Students are very proud of their school and talk warmly of its ethos. The parental community is supportive of the school and confident in its ability to prepare students for success in life.

The headteacher is described by his colleagues as 'inspirational' and he has made a significant personal impact on the school over time. Parents refer widely to an 'excellent head' and he is highly respected by students. He works closely with his senior team to provide excellent overall leadership to the school, blending experience with innovation. The expansion of this team has enabled heads of successful departments to take senior leadership roles and this is having a strong impact on school improvement, although the rigour of self-evaluation varies between subjects. Subject leaders talk of a culture which encourages them to innovate and 'try out new ideas'.

Recognising underachievement in some key subject areas, the school has made up a lot of ground since the previous inspection. Improving the quality of provision in the sixth form is now a priority. New leadership and management arrangements, with good teaching, are already beginning to have an impact on standards. The school's specialist status has been exploited very well to raise achievement and strengthen local links. Strong leadership, which has the support of the wider school community, means that it has good capacity for further rapid improvement.

## Effectiveness of the sixth form

### Grade: 3

Students in the sixth form reach standards which are in line with national averages. Attainment at the end of Year 12 has been less successful in the past two years. Achievement is satisfactory overall but with significant variation in the performance of subjects. Students achieve best in art and less well in biology, geography, history, ICT and religious studies. Results were very high in the new BTEC information and communication technology course.

Teaching in the sixth form is generally good and teachers' enthusiasm for their subjects is a strength. Lessons are well-organised, though activities are not always sufficiently targeted to individual students or matched to their levels of attainment. Students are very positive about the quality of their teaching and the marking of their work. The curriculum is satisfactory, and still quite narrow, although it has developed in the past year with the valuable addition of BTEC ICT.

Students are very happy at the school, develop well and speak with enthusiasm of a very friendly and supportive community. Attendance and punctuality to lessons are good. Students work hard and apply themselves well to tasks set. The contribution made by these older students to the life of the school and local community is outstanding. Careers guidance for higher education is very good.

The leadership and management of the sixth form are satisfactory, although improving rapidly. The recently appointed head of year 12 has a very clear grasp of what needs to be done but this has not yet been written in a formal plan. Tracking and support systems for students have improved significantly this year. Departmental evaluations of results are very brief and do not provide a sufficiently searching analysis of where students have performed well, and less well, in examinations, and why.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Improve provision and achievement in the sixth form to match progress made in the main school.
- Develop a greater consistency of good practice - particularly in areas such as planning and assessment - across all subject teams through tight and rigorous self-evaluation.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 2

Students enter the school with standards slightly above national averages. Their progress over Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory and improving. Standards reached at the end of Year 9 in English are high and significantly so in mathematics and science. Higher attaining students do well in mathematics and science.

The proportion of students achieving five or more A\* to C grades at the end of Year 11 has been significantly above the national average in recent years, and above it when English and mathematics are included. Particularly high standards are achieved in English, mathematics, science, business studies, art and physical education. Progress over Years 10 and 11 has been improving and school data confirms that it is now good.

Overall progress throughout the school for all groups of students, including those with learning difficulties and those for whom English is not the first language, is good. The school monitors closely the achievement of different minority ethnic groups and addresses any variations from

year to year. The school sets challenging targets for all students on entry and reviews them at the end of each year. The use of this data is more effective in Years 10 and 11 than across Years 7 to 9.

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

### **Grade: 2**

Students' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good. Attendance is good; punctuality has improved since the last inspection and is now good. A major strength of the school is the sense of community: students are very proud of their school and enjoy being there. There is a calm atmosphere, both in and out of lessons, and students from different ethnic backgrounds work together and socialise very well. Whilst a very few parents believe that the school should respond more promptly to behaviour and bullying incidents, the inspection found that students behave well and that they treat each other with respect. Students report that there is minimal bullying and, where it occurs, it is dealt with promptly. An elderly local resident recently commended students' exemplary behaviour on buses. Students speak confidently and fluently. School council members and prefects, together with sixth formers, make a considerable contribution to the life of the school and to the well-being of younger students. The school places considerable emphasis on students' fitness and has a wide range of well-attended sporting clubs. Students generally show a good understanding about how to lead healthy lives: they understand about the dangers of drug misuse and smoking and are involved in ecological and recycling projects. However, healthy eating is not promoted strongly enough and too few students take up healthy options at lunchtime. Work experience and enterprise activities are effectively organised and students' basic skills in literacy, numeracy, ICT and financial management are well-developed.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teaching and learning are good overall. In the best lessons, there is a tangible effect on students of the teacher's enthusiasm and good subject knowledge is effectively shared. High expectations and good relationships allow the teacher to drive the lesson, involving students in a variety of activities, which allow for collaborative work and individual study. The best teachers make good use of assessment and this helps to raise standards. For example, in both a geography and a photography lesson the successful use of peer assessment led to very rapid progress. Very occasionally lessons are not planned well and this results in low expectations and a slow pace which fail to engage students, who then become passive; this restricts learning.

The benefits of the mathematics and computing specialism are seen in most, but not all, classrooms in the form of interactive whiteboards, although effective use of these is still variable. In most subjects students are aware of their targets but do not always know what they need to do to move from one level to the next. Books are regularly marked and the best teachers give students excellent assessment feedback.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

Following the last inspection the college carried out a comprehensive review of the curriculum with a view to meeting the needs of all learners and, as a result, introduced a wider range of

vocational courses, particularly in Year 10, through links with local colleges. These include engineering, construction, motor vehicle maintenance and catering, and also BTEC courses in sport, science and ICT. Spanish and Mandarin Chinese were introduced to extend the languages curriculum and to contribute to the students' future economic well-being and global understanding. There is a wide range of extra-curricular activities, particularly in physical education. Students are well prepared for the world of work. They have a comprehensive careers programme, which includes two weeks' work experience for all Year 10 pupils and a range of activity days, including two led by the Army. Students with learning difficulties and disabilities are well supported and make good progress. Provision for those who are gifted and talented is now good in some subjects including links with Cambridge University and also China but further development is planned to take place in other areas of the curriculum. Specialist status has resulted in high levels of success in mathematics and examination results have improved year on year.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

Students in the school say that they feel cared for and supported. Relationships are good and students express their appreciation that the headteacher and his team take personal responsibility for their welfare on public transport at the end the day. Strong relationships with the police contribute well to students' feeling safe. The anti-bullying policy is effective and rare cases are dealt with well. Procedures for child protection are complete and supported by effective staff training. Attendance is good but, where problems do arise, close relationships with parents are used to bring about improvement. Links with primary schools ensure the smooth transfer of students into Year 7 and the school's work with external agencies and community-based organizations is highly productive. There are good plans to use extended school opportunities to develop work with parents, to engage them further in their children's education. The great majority of parents feel that they are fully informed of their child's progress. Teachers now have access to comprehensive assessment data that are being used to set targets for individuals which enables them to make good progress. In some subjects marking contains insufficient explanation of how to improve. Lesson planning sometimes lacks rigour in challenging those who are gifted and talented. The main school provides good support for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

The leadership and management of the school are good overall. The school is implementing increasingly effective measures to raise standards in areas of recognised underachievement. The curriculum has expanded since the last inspection to broaden opportunities, with a strong emphasis on mathematics and information and communication technology. Partnerships with other schools and, in particular, with Croydon College enable students to develop a wide portfolio in Years 10 and 11. Senior leaders and governors have a good knowledge of their school's strengths and weaknesses, but self-evaluation, although honest and realistic, needs further formalising. A good start has been made, but procedures across subject areas and in the sixth form need to be more rigorous and consistent.

The headteacher provides outstanding personal leadership, recognised by all parts of the school community. Identifying significant underachievement in science and several foundation subjects,

he has galvanised colleagues, students and parents to make improvements in many key areas of teaching and learning. Improvements in science, with rising success rates at all levels, reflect the school's ability to make effective interventions. Successful approaches to the recruitment and retention of teachers have resulted in an increasingly skilled and dynamic staff. Some bold recent appointments are changing the dynamic of middle leadership.

The headteacher and his senior team monitor classroom work, and current good teaching and learning demonstrate the successful impact of this strategy. Governors are also involved in analysing examination results and holding underperforming subject departments to account. However, monitoring at departmental level is uneven. Subject leaders mostly demonstrate a good understanding of their roles and they are now tracking pupils' progress in their subjects to set clear targets for improvement. Although this practice is not yet fully consistent across all subjects, clear procedures are in place. Good line management by senior leaders is raising the quality of subject leadership and has the potential to bring about the consistency of approach required, particularly across foundation subjects, to make further rapid improvement.



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## Annex A

## 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?	2	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	3

### Achievement and standards

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

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

### Personal development and well-being

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

### The quality of provision

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

### Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2	
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No	
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No	

**Annex B****Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

21 October 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of St Joseph's College, London, SE19 3HL

On behalf of the inspection team I want to let you know the judgements we made about your school. First, I should like to thank you for your warm welcome. We enjoyed watching you at work and hearing your views, and reading those of your parents and carers.

We agree with you that your school is a good school, which has improved rapidly in recent years. You all express great confidence in your headteacher. He and his colleagues work hard to ensure that you get a good education. Results in English and science are good and your achievements in the school's specialist subject, mathematics, are really outstanding. Opportunities in information and communication technology are also developing fast and you are seizing these with enthusiasm. We agree with your school that in some subjects, such as languages, the humanities and design and technology, the quality of teaching and learning is not as good as in other areas. The school is now making the right changes through improving its use of self-evaluation. We have urged that all subjects give you the best possible learning experiences to help you get even better results.

You told us how proud you are of your school community and appreciative of the many opportunities on offer, including in sports, the arts and international links. We were impressed by your behaviour and by the mutual respect and support you show each other. Students from a range of cultural, faith and language backgrounds get on very well together and you are learning important lessons for the future. The school's curriculum in Key Stage 4 is changing fast, and many new opportunities are opening up for you. We have asked your school to ensure, as a priority, that the curriculum in the sixth form is improved to match developments in the main school.

We wish you all well as you continue to work hard, succeed and contribute to making the world a better place.

Yours sincerely

Anne Feltham

Her Majesty's Inspector