

St Joseph's Catholic High School, Business & Enterprise College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112401
Local Authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	325599
Inspection date	24 March 2009
Reporting inspector	Brian Dower

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Peter Hayes
Headteacher	Mr Tom Ryan
Date of previous school inspection	1 November 2005
School address	Harrington Road Workington Cumbria CA14 3EE
Telephone number	01900 873290
Fax number	01900 734360

Age group	11–16
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

He evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- the accuracy of the school's analysis of provision and students' academic and personal development
- how well different subjects were performing
- the attainment of the most able students
- teachers' assessments of work and the quality of the oral and written guidance they give to students on how to improve
- the effectiveness of the school's efforts to promote community cohesion.

Evidence was collected from the school's self-evaluation, nationally published assessment data, the school's records of students' progress and standards, observations of lessons and the school's plans for further improvement. Discussions with students, staff and governors were held and questionnaires returned by parents were considered.

Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified. These have been included, where appropriate, in this report.

Description of the school

St Joseph's is smaller than the average secondary school. It is a popular choice with parents and students and is oversubscribed. Students attend the school from a wide area, parts of which experience significant social and economic deprivation. Students are mainly from White British backgrounds but there is a small number who have English as an additional language. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is average and the proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. The school is a specialist college for business and enterprise.

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. Students reach broadly average academic standards and progress and achievement are good when set against their below average attainment on entry to Year 7. Their personal development is outstanding and parents appreciate the excellent care and support their children receive. A comment from the parents of a girl in her last year in the school epitomises the views of many: 'She has developed in positive directions in all areas; intellectual, social, emotional and spiritual.'

The proportion of students in 2008 attaining five or more GCSE passes at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, was slightly above average and was an improvement on 2007. The proportion attaining five or more A* to G passes was well above average. The school's overall performance targets were exceeded and the specialist college targets were met. The school exceeded its targets by a wide margin in information and communication technology (ICT) because of the high standards in the subject. Good progress has been made since the previous inspection in raising standards in mathematics, particularly for the most able Year 9 students. There have been significant improvements in the standards reached in modern foreign languages. Standards in physical education and geography are below average and are a priority for improvement. Too few students attain at the higher A* and A GCSE grades at the end of Year 11. Measures are in place to address this including targeting these pupils and providing additional booster classes. These initiatives reflect the school's policy on providing equally for all and are beginning to accelerate the progress of these pupils.

Students develop excellent qualities for gaining success in their future lives. They become confident young people who are very well prepared for the next stage in their education and for future employment. They have good basic skills in literacy,

numeracy and information and communication technology and use these flexibly across all subjects. They say they enjoy their work and feel safe and secure because working relationships are based on mutual respect and understanding. Attendance is above average and students are punctual to school and to lessons. Exclusions are few in number. Students' behaviour is excellent and they know right from wrong. They are sensitive to the needs of others and do a great deal to raise money for a range of charities. Older students have responsibilities as prefects and as mentors to the younger students. Students' views and suggestions are channelled through the school council, resulting in improvements in landscaping around the school and a healthier canteen menu. The importance of rest, diet and exercise to health and well-being is understood and acted upon. Students have a very good understanding of the diversity of British society and their own and other cultures and faiths. Their social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is exceptional.

Students progress well because teaching and learning are good. They are attentive in class, sustain concentration and work independently and in collaboration with others. The impact of the school's specialist status as a business and enterprise college is seen in students' self-reliance and their willingness to find things out for themselves, take risks and learn from mistakes. They say that teachers and teaching assistants are approachable and give generously of their time out of lessons to provide additional help when difficulties are encountered. Teachers have good subject knowledge, set appropriately challenging work, monitor students' progress in lessons assiduously and give effective guidance to individuals and groups on how to improve. They make good use of information and communication technology as a teaching and learning aid.

Learning activities are varied and often innovative. Year 10 students had to barter goods in their history lesson and so use their enterprise and communication skills to learn the art of self-reliance. As a result, they understood the challenges facing many Americans at the time of Prohibition. There is, however, inconsistency in how well teachers use questioning techniques to extend students' thinking and challenge them to explain 'how' and 'why' they arrived at an answer. Opportunities are sometimes missed for discussion which would enable students to reflect on how well they are learning and to benefit from the views of others.

Curriculum provision is good. Statutory requirements are met. The school's specialist status has broadened provision and resulted in opportunities for students to develop business and financial understanding and enterprise skills. The school has introduced a GCSE in the expressive arts as an option choice because popular extra-curricular activities in music, art and drama were contributing significantly to students' self-confidence and enjoyment. Good progress has been made in developing the Key Stage 3 curriculum to provide for students' personal, learning and thinking skills. The personal, social, health and citizenship programme is central to students' growing maturity and their understanding that with rights come responsibilities. The school has been innovative in its provision of a national vocation catering qualification which gives students a practical insight into running a business and extends their employment opportunities. The school is looking to ways to extend the vocational pathways for older students to improve the balance and breadth of the curriculum.

The care and support students receive is outstanding. The small number of students from minority ethnic backgrounds, those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and vulnerable students are fully integrated with the life of the school and make the same progress as others. There are excellent links with outside agencies to support them in their development. There are strong links with partner schools and colleges to ensure students are integrated well into Year 7 and have the support and advice they need when proceeding to further education or training after Year 11. Academic guidance is good. Students have challenging long-term attainment targets and appropriate short-term improvement goals to help them on their way. Teachers' marking is regular and supportive but at times written comments fail to guide students on how to improve. Safeguarding procedures conform to government requirements, health and safety audits are conducted on a regular basis and risk assessments carried out at appropriate times.

Leadership, management and governance are good. The headteacher, supported by an able and hard working senior team, has been instrumental in securing significant improvements since the previous inspection. This is particularly apparent in students' better academic progress and rising standards although in some subjects not enough is always being done to accelerate students' progress. A major improvement is the creation of a harmonious working community where there is a very strong commitment to equality of opportunity for every student. The school is very active in planning and promoting an excellent contribution to community cohesion. There is a powerful sense of unity and common purpose about the school. Christian values and respect for the beliefs and faiths of others are fully shared by all staff and students. Self-evaluation is extremely accurate and appropriate priorities are in place to take the school forward. Good use is made of performance targets to raise standards further. Rigorous monitoring of provision and evaluation of its impact on pupils' progress characterise the most effective subject leadership. Governors are knowledgeable and closely involved in the life of the school. They play their part in asking the right questions and in forward planning. The school has a good capacity to improve on what has already been achieved.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the rigour of teachers' questioning and extend opportunities for students to reflect on and to discuss their learning.
- Increase the proportion of students attaining at the highest A* and A grades at GCSE.

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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
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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
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

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

¹Grade 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

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

The quality of provision

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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
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	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	1
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
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**

Dear Students

Inspection of St Joseph's Catholic High School, Business & Enterprise College, Cumbria, CA14 3EE

Thank you for the welcome I received when I visited your school recently. I spent an enjoyable day with you, but with too little time to see all the interesting activities you are involved in. The students who gave of their time to talk to me during the lunch break helped me to understand what is special about your school. Many of you spoke to me in lessons about the progress you are making. I was impressed by your courtesy and your appreciation of the efforts of the staff to give you every chance to succeed. Please thank your parents for sending in the completed questionnaire.

Yours is a good school with outstanding features. You make rapid progress in your work and standards are rising. What you achieve by the time you leave is therefore good. You have good basic skills and use these well in all curriculum areas. I have asked the school to increase the proportion of students attaining at the highest A* and A grades in the GCSE examinations.

The way you mature as young people is exceptional. You are confident and self-reliant, prepared to find out things for yourselves and to question and learn from mistakes. Behaviour and attitudes are excellent, you have a keen sense of right and wrong and you do much for those less fortunate than yourselves. You told me that the school is special because it is a harmonious working community. I agree. It is also a place where outstanding care and support is given to everyone.

Many of you said how much you appreciate the extra time that teachers and teaching assistants give to help you with problems. You told me that teaching is good and that is my view. You are given challenging and interesting learning activities and you respond by working hard. There was a sense of purpose and enjoyment in the lessons I visited and the challenge of the work was leavened with humour. I have asked the school to ensure that teachers' questioning becomes more rigorous and that you are given more opportunities for discussion.

Thank you again for your welcome. My best wishes to you all.

Yours faithfully

Brian Dower

Lead inspector