

St Joseph's RC High School and Sports College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105262
Local Authority	Bolton
Inspection number	336465
Inspection dates	10–11 March 2010
Reporting inspector	Clive Moss HMI

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 of pupils on the school roll	890
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rev Fr Henry Jones
Headteacher	Mr L Conley
Date of previous school inspection	14 February 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 33 lessons observing 31 teachers, observed assemblies, tutor periods and other activities in which pupils were learning, and made other, short visits to lessons to look at particular and specific elements, such as the marking of pupils' work. They held meetings with governors, staff and groups of pupils. They looked at pupils' work, school policies and plans, records of pupils' involvement in school activities, records relating to behaviour, support for pupils and lesson observations carried out by the school. They looked also at questionnaires completed by pupils and members of staff and 263 completed by parents and carers.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- pupils' progress as seen in lessons and in their work
- how well the school identifies and provides support for pupils at risk of underachieving
- the quality of teaching, including opportunities for pupils to use new technologies and how well teachers provide pupils with information on their progress and how they can improve
- how well the school monitors and evaluates the progress of activities to improve the quality of teaching.

Information about the school

St Joseph's RC High School and Sports College is slightly smaller than the average-sized secondary school. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is below average. The proportion of pupils whose first language is not, or is believed not to be, English is small. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average overall, but is average for those with statements of special educational needs. The school has achieved several awards in recognition of the quality of its work. These include the Sportsmark, the Healthy School award, the International School award and the Eco School Silver award. The school has a long-established specialism in sport.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

The school provides a good education for its pupils and is improving. There are some things it does particularly well, notably the range of opportunities provided for pupils that enrich the curriculum and, in particular, opportunities for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. These opportunities enable the pupils to develop rapidly into mature and reflective young people, with a well balanced approach to life and the world around them. The pupils bring high levels of personal motivation and very positive attitudes to learning. As a result, not only do they extract the full benefit from the opportunities provided by the school, but also they enhance what is provided and contribute significantly to their own success. The school is regarded very highly by parents and carers.

There is a strong sense of community at the school. This is reflected in the good quality of care for pupils. Pupils' attendance is high. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Senior leaders have tackled the areas for development at the last inspection conscientiously and brought about improvements in the quality of teaching. In the lessons observed, however, teachers' use of questions and strategies to assess pupils' progress, during lessons and to promote greater learning, were inconsistent. Learning support assistants were not always provided with well-focused tasks to support their pupils in lessons. Mostly, pupils know how well they are doing and say that teachers give them clear advice on how to improve. The marking of pupils' work is varied, however, in terms both of frequency and quality. The curriculum provides a good range of opportunities for pupils. The use of information and communication technology has increased, but pupils do not make frequent use of the broad range of new technologies to support their learning.

The school has good capacity to improve further. There have been important improvements at the school since the last inspection. Pupils' results in public examinations are high and improving. The proportion of pupils achieving a high grade GCSE in the specialist subjects has been almost twice the national average in science in each of the last two years, and results in physical education were above average in 2009. Senior leaders have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Monitoring the quality of teaching is not carried out consistently well at all levels, however, and the information gained through the activity is not always used vigorously to drive improvements.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of teaching that is good or better to at least 80% by:

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- ensuring more consistent use of the outstanding practice seen at the school, particularly in assessing pupils' progress in lessons and providing them with guidance on how to improve and when marking their work
- developing teachers' questioning techniques so that questions are consistently focused and structured to challenge and extend the pupils' thinking
- ensure support staff in lessons have clear and focused tasks for their pupils.
- Improve the consistency of the monitoring and evaluation of the quality of teaching so that:
 - monitoring activities are undertaken with equal rigour at all levels and in all areas of the school's work
 - all leaders and managers use the information about the quality of teaching and pupils' learning with equal vigour to bring more lessons up to the standard of the best.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**1**

Pupils make good progress at the school. The school monitors carefully differences in the progress made by groups of pupils and takes effective action to reduce any differences. For example, a group of girls received a specially designed programme of support and the school's data show their progress is now similar to that of other pupils at the school. The progress made by pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is satisfactory. It has been affected by the quality of provision for a very small number of these pupils who have been educated off-site. The school has rectified the problems, but there has not been sufficient time for the action taken to impact on outcomes for these pupils.

Most pupils enjoy their education. This is shown in the comments they made to inspectors and in surveys carried out by the school and for the inspection, and in their response in lessons. In the lessons seen during the inspection, the pupils showed pride in their work and demonstrated excellent levels of concentration. Most pupils go on to further education or training after Year 11.

The pupils' exemplary behaviour is often remarked upon by employers and members of the public with whom they come into contact. Inspectors found pupils' behaviour to be outstanding also. Pupils' behaviour and attitudes are a significant factor in the outcomes they achieve. Instances of racial intolerance are rare. Relationships between different groups of pupils are harmonious and pupils' understanding and appreciation of different cultures are supported by events such as Pakistan Day, when they are provided with opportunities to meet with young people from other faiths and backgrounds.

Almost all pupils say they feel safe at school always and they show a high level of understanding of how to stay safe. Activities such as the 'My Body' project and the work of the Fair Trade Group have enabled pupils to develop an excellent knowledge of how to stay healthy. The proportion of pupils participating in sport is well above average.

Pupils express great pride in the various roles they fulfil that make a notable

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contribution to the school, local and even international communities. They talk modestly but convincingly and with conviction about the impact of the work they do, citing evidence for this, and have a sense of themselves as ambassadors for youth so that, as one pupil expressed it, members of the local community 'are realising not all young people are bad'. Another pupil described how the work of the school's Justice and Peace Group was helping pupils to 'stand up for what's right'. Many pupils have been involved in activities that have raised substantial sums of money for charities.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	1
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

In the best lessons observed at the school, teachers explained clearly to pupils how to achieve different grades and levels. The teachers used an extensive range of methods to assess how well pupils were doing and demonstrated detailed knowledge of each pupil's strengths and needs. They used questions skilfully to extend the pupils' understanding. For example, in one outstanding English lesson, the teacher's skilful assessment of pupils' progress led to opportunities for the pupils to influence the subject of the lesson. This resulted in extremely high levels of pupils' motivation and rapid learning. This

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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quality of teaching was not consistent in all lessons. In other less successful but still satisfactory lessons, pupils made good progress as a result of their very positive attitudes to learning and desire to do well. These lessons contained a more limited range of teaching styles and were characterised by higher proportions of time spent with teachers talking and work that was not adapted sufficiently for the full range of pupils' abilities.

The curriculum meets the statutory requirements and includes an emphasis on religious education and sport appropriate to the school's character and specialism. It is extended at Key Stage 4 to include a broad range of qualifications that enables the school to provide for the needs of all its pupils. It is adapted to provide more personalised approaches, for example, for pupils who prefer practical, work-related activities. These adaptations are successful in improving pupils' motivation to learn, resulting in improved progress in other subjects. The pupils respond very well to the numerous themed activities that enhance the curriculum. For example, a project on 'Northern Soul' enabled pupils to learn about an aspect of social and cultural history closely associated with their local area and involved working with local employers in the creative and entertainment industries. Activities such as this make a significant contribution to the excellent outcomes for pupils. The school offers a wide range of extra-curricular activities that are popular with pupils.

Pupils are provided with a wide range of support, including access to trained counsellors. Pupils' transition from primary school works very effectively and they are enabled to settle into the school quickly. The pupils offer considerable support to each other, such as taking on formal roles as peer mentors. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress when they are provided with specific, targeted support for their particular needs, but the support provided in lessons is sometimes not focused sufficiently. The school's Haven Centre provides a supportive environment throughout the day for pupils needing additional support and enables these pupils to remain a full part of the school community. Pupils experiencing difficulties as a result of injuries told inspectors that the school made arrangements to ensure they were still able to take part fully in lessons.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

Senior leaders have brought improvements in the quality of teaching and learning

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through more focused monitoring and accurate evaluation of quality, supported by opportunities for the professional development of the staff. The school has made very effective use of its specialist status to develop a wide range of high quality partnerships with the local community and other schools and colleges. These partnerships enable the school to provide a much greater range of opportunities for the pupils than would be possible otherwise.

Arrangements for safeguarding pupils are good. The school is alert to and adopts recommended good practice. The school's work to promote equal opportunities is good, although its policies are basic and lack detailed action plans. The school monitors pupils' participation in the many school activities but does not analyse the information routinely to ensure equal access for all. Activity to promote community cohesion is very effective, but the school has not completed all the formal requirements associated with this duty. Although anticipated imminently, the school had not achieved the National Financial Management in Schools standard at the time of the inspection.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Views of parents and carers

A very large majority of parents and carers are highly satisfied with their children's experience at the school. Many parents and carers wrote highly complimentary comments about the school, praising its ethos, the quality of leadership, the level of care for pupils and particular examples of its work, including testimonials for individual members of staff. A very small proportion would like to be better informed about the progress of their children. Inspectors found that the pupils enjoy their education, make

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good progress and achieve high standards in many aspects of their education and development. They judged the level of care, guidance and support for pupils to be good. They found that the school is improving and judged it to have good capacity to improve further.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Joseph's RC High School and Sports College to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 263 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 890 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	170	65	89	34	3	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	189	72	71	27	1	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	151	57	100	38	9	3	1	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	157	60	96	37	5	2	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	161	61	100	38	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	128	49	120	46	9	3	1	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	111	42	141	54	10	4	1	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	144	55	109	41	2	1	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	143	54	110	42	4	2	1	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	170	65	84	32	4	2	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	121	46	125	48	7	3	1	0
The school is led and managed effectively	192	73	69	26	1	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	193	73	69	26	0	0	1	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



12 March 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Joseph's RC High School and Sports College, Bolton, BL6 6HW

Thank you for talking to my colleagues and me and making us welcome when we visited your school recently. Here is a summary of the main findings, which I hope will be of interest to you.

- St Joseph's RC High School and Sports College provides you with a good education.
- You make good progress from your starting points when you join the school. Your results in public examinations are high. You make a highly important contribution to your own success, because of your willingness to learn and positive attitudes.
- Your attendance is high.
- Your behaviour is exemplary. The inspectors found you to be mature and reflective young people.
- The school is particularly good at promoting your spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Many of you take part in a wide variety of activities that involve you in helping the school and others in the local community and beyond.
- You have a good range of courses to choose from. The range of international links that you benefit from is particularly impressive.
- The school provides those of you who need additional help with good support.
- Most of your parents and carers support the school and think it is doing a good job.
- The headteacher and the staff at the school have a good understanding of what needs to be done to make things even better.

I have asked the headteacher and the staff to make further improvements, so that teachers are more consistent in the ways they check on your progress in lessons, provide you with guidance on how to improve and use questions to challenge and extend your thinking. For those of you who receive additional help in lessons, I want the teachers to make sure that the help is focused carefully on your particular learning needs. Also, I want the school to check on the quality of teaching more thoroughly and use the information more effectively to make more lessons as good as the best the inspectors saw. Many of you, I know, already make a very important contribution to the school and I am sure all of you will want to do everything you can to support the staff in making St Joseph's better still.

Yours sincerely

Clive Moss

Her Majesty's Inspector

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