

# Joseph Swan School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	131048
<b>Local Authority</b>	Gateshead
<b>Inspection number</b>	341088
<b>Inspection dates</b>	3–4 March 2010
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Ann Wallis

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>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1257
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	198
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Mike Jones
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Allan Fuller
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>School address</b>	Saltwell Road South Gateshead Tyne and Wear NE9 6LE
<b>Telephone number</b>	0191 4422000
<b>Fax number</b>	0191 4422001
<b>Email address</b>	enquiries@josephswan.org.uk

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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by five additional inspectors. The inspectors spent 85% of the inspection looking at learning, observed 33 teachers, visited 33 lessons and held meetings with governors, staff and groups of students. They observed the school's work, and looked at documents including the school improvement plan, students' progress data and students' books. They analysed 119 questionnaires from parents, 137 from students and eight from staff

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

- the attainment and progress of students, particularly in mathematics
- how effectively assessment is used to plan future learning and help students to improve their work
- the effectiveness of leaders and managers in bringing about improvement, particularly in the sixth form
- the school's strategies to improve attendance.

## Information about the school

This above average sized school has held specialist status for technology since 2001. The number of students eligible for a free school meal is well above average. Most students are White British. Almost 10% of students come from minority ethnic backgrounds, but few of these are at the early stages of learning English. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average. The school holds a number of awards, including the Healthy Schools Award. The on-site provision for childcare, 'Joseph Swan Playscheme, runs during the summer holidays and is subject to a separate inspection.

**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

Joseph Swan is a good school that continues to improve. It has many strengths. At the heart of its work are the good care, guidance and support it provides for a diverse group of students who have a very wide range of academic and personal needs. An increasingly innovative curriculum, that is well matched to the needs of these students, together with good teaching in the large majority of lessons are key contributors to the good progress students make.

Since the last inspection, standards have continued to rise and the school has a good capacity to improve further. This is because leaders and managers evaluate the work of the school rigorously and accurately, and know its strengths and weaknesses well. Priorities for improvement are clear and any weaknesses are tackled quickly. For example, students have been achieving less well in mathematics than in English in GCSE examinations. The school has put in place a raft of measures to address this weakness and students are now making at least satisfactory progress in lessons in mathematics. Currently, Year 11 students are on track to reach challenging targets in mathematics this year. Similarly, the school has recognised the need to accelerate students' progress in the sixth form and because of closer monitoring of their work, the provision of more appropriate courses and better guidance, standards are now rising. However, these improvements have yet to become embedded fully and their impact realised in improved examination results.

Students enter Year 7 with attainment which is below average and make good progress as they move through the school to reach standards which are broadly average overall at the end of Year 11. They achieve well because the large majority of teaching is good or better. In most lessons, students complete a variety of interesting tasks, work at a brisk pace and enjoy learning. Work is usually marked regularly but does not always give students clear pointers for improvement. Although there are examples of high quality marking, particularly in English, this good practice is not consistent across the school. Assessment data is used very effectively by some teachers to plan future learning, but again this is not consistent across the school.

The school is working very hard to improve attendance, but this remains low. Recently introduced and more creative strategies to improve attendance are now having an effect and attendance is rising, whilst the number of persistent absentees is declining quickly. Nevertheless, despite the current trend of improvement, attendance remains too low.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

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- Raise attainment and accelerate students' progress, by:
  - refining and embedding new initiatives to improve attainment and progress so that the impact of these is seen in improved examination results in GCSE mathematics and in the sixth form
  - ensuring that teachers' marking of students' work is of consistently high quality and gives them helpful pointers for improvement
  - making consistently good use of assessment data to plan work that is well matched to students' needs.
- Improve levels of attendance, by:
  - developing and embedding recently introduced strategies to raise attendance, to maximise their effectiveness and ensure that the current trend of improvement accelerates
  - working even more closely with a small group of parents and carers to raise attendance and reduce the number of persistent absentees.

**Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils****2**

Students were seen to be making good progress in lessons as a result of their good attitudes to learning and the good teaching they receive. Most students work at a good pace and are keen to succeed, thus wasting little learning time. A few students have a shorter concentration span but most teachers manage their learning well and engage their interest effectively. They are quickly brought back to the task in hand if their attention wanders. Work in students' books and the school's detailed student tracking data confirmed the good progress they are making from below average starting points. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who are vulnerable, all make equally good progress because they receive well-targeted support from teachers and teaching assistants. Results at GCSE are broadly average and show an upward trend. In 2009, challenging school targets were met except in mathematics. The gap between students' achievement in mathematics and that in English is now narrowing. This is because of improvements in teaching in mathematics, closer monitoring of students' progress and courses which are better suited to students' abilities.

Most students are well aware of how to stay safe and healthy and clearly understand the dangers of alcohol and drugs. They behave well in lessons and most show respect for each other and for school staff. They contribute to their own school community through the school council and hence have a voice in school decision making. Attendance is low, but is now rising rapidly and the core of students who remain persistent absentees is reducing quickly. Students have good team working skills, basic literacy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills are developed well and their numeracy skills are improving rapidly. Hence, students are satisfactorily prepared for future life.

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*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	3
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	2
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	4
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>2</b>

## How effective is the provision?

All teaching seen during the inspection was at least satisfactory, the large majority was good and in a few lessons teaching was outstanding. In most lessons, work is matched well to the needs of all students and they are challenged to achieve their best. Teachers use ICT well to display a range of interesting resources. Students enjoy learning because activities are varied and often involve group work and practical activities. In less successful lessons, although students make satisfactory progress, the pace of learning is slower. This is because learning is not checked as regularly and work is not as well-matched to the needs of all students. The use of assessment data to plan learning and the quality of marking both vary across the school. This lack of consistency means that students are not always sure how to improve their work.

The curriculum is reviewed regularly and is increasingly well-matched to students' needs. A suitable balance of vocational and academic courses are on offer, so that older students can choose an appropriate pathway to prepare them for future work, sixth form studies or further education beyond school. The curriculum is well-supported through links the school has made, partly as a result of its specialist technology status,

<sup>1</sup> 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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with other partners and organisations such as colleges, schools and businesses. Almost a quarter of students attend a range of courses at other schools and colleges. A successful 'Learning to Learn' course helps to develop younger students' skills well. A good range of enrichment activities, after-school clubs and visitors to the school all add to students' enjoyment of learning.

The school has a very diverse mix of students including some in care, refugees and disabled students. Some students are particularly vulnerable and many have specific special educational needs and/or disabilities. The school supports all these groups of students very well, monitors their progress carefully and intervenes in their learning to give them extra guidance and support when needed. The school liaises very effectively with a wide range of outside agencies to provide appropriate specialist support for students. Staff are tireless in their efforts to improve attendance. Good arrangements are in place to ensure the smooth transition of students between different phases of their education. Several parents and carers commented on how well their children had settled into Year 7.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

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

**How effective are leadership and management?**

Leaders and managers at all levels have an ambitious vision for their students, set them challenging targets and are firmly focused on raising their attainment to the highest levels. Consequently, the school continues to improve as strengths are celebrated and any weaknesses, such as those in mathematics, are tackled successfully. Students' progress is tracked very carefully and monitoring of teaching is regular and accurate. However, some initiatives to raise standards are quite recent and their impact has yet to be realised in improved final examination results. Governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses but have yet to be involved fully in determining its strategic direction or in seeking and acting on the views of parents. All safeguarding procedures are firmly in place. Staff training is recent and child protection procedures are very robust. The school promotes equal opportunities well. All groups of students are given good support and all make equally good progress. Any racial or other form of discrimination is not tolerated. The school promotes community cohesion satisfactorily. Good links with outside agencies are helping the school to reach out into the local community. The school has carried out an audit of what it does to promote community cohesion, but has not evaluated fully the impact of its actions. The school

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works closely with parents and carers and makes good use of ICT to keep them well informed. The great majority of parents and carers were very appreciative of the way in which the school keeps them informed about their children's progress. However, there are still a very few parents and carers whose children do not attend school regularly, that the school is working hard to reach

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

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

## Sixth form

This is a satisfactory but rapidly improving sixth form. Students enter the sixth form with standards which are broadly in line with those found nationally. The progress they make is variable but satisfactory overall, with the best progress being made in the vocational courses. There has been steady improvement over the last three years and school data indicates that the majority of current students are well on track to achieve their potential. More than half of all Year 11 students stay on into the sixth form. Retention rates are good and more than two-thirds of students finish their courses and many continue to university. Students enjoy being in the sixth form, value the wide curriculum choices especially the additional Open University courses and the opportunity to explore ideas and research independently during their 'One Plus' period. Their improved punctuality and attendance is a testimony to students' commitment to their courses. Since the time of the last inspection, the school has been proactive in developing new courses which are tailored to individual student's needs, improving the quality of monitoring of students' work and supporting students who may be at risk of underachieving. It has also focused on the quality of learning in lessons and moved



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towards more opportunities for students to work independently. This, combined with an effective tutorial system, has resulted in regular reviews which students say is the driving force behind their success. The sixth form is led and managed satisfactorily but new initiatives need closer monitoring in order to further refine and embed them.

*These are the grades for the sixth form*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the sixth form</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	3
The quality of provision in the sixth form	3
Leadership and management of the sixth form	3

### **Views of parents and carers**

The large majority of parents and carers who responded to the inspection questionnaire are supportive of the school and pleased with the education their children receive. A very few parents and carers commented that the school did not deal effectively with poor behaviour and that rules regarding the wearing of correct uniform were not enforced strictly enough. Inspectors found no evidence to support these views.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Joseph Swan School 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 119 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1257 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	35	29	78	66	6	5	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	41	34	75	63	3	3	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	36	30	77	65	5	4	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	33	28	82	69	4	3	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	30	25	80	67	7	6	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	24	20	84	71	9	8	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	19	16	90	76	6	5	2	2
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)	34	29	77	65	5	4	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	27	23	82	69	6	5	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	33	28	75	63	7	6	3	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	18	15	83	70	11	9	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	29	24	80	67	6	5	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	39	33	74	62	2	2	3	3

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"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
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.**



5 March 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Joseph Swan School, Gateshead, NE9 6LE

Thank you for making the inspection team welcome when we visited your school last week. We would particularly like to thank those of you who talked with us about what you felt were the strengths and areas for improvement in your school.

These are the main findings in our report:

- yours is a good school where you reach average standards and achieve well
- you behave well, treat each other with respect and most of you work hard in lessons
- your school is well led and managed by the headteacher and senior staff
- you are taught well and follow an interesting curriculum
- the care, guidance and support you receive are good.

This is what we have asked your school to do now.

Raise attainment and accelerate your progress by:

- continuing to develop new ways to improve your attainment and progress particularly in mathematics and in the sixth form
- ensuring marking of your work is of a consistently high quality and gives you helpful pointers for improvement
- making good use of assessment data to plan future work that is well matched to your needs.

Improve your levels of attendance by:

- ensuring that new ways, such as the rewards system, to improve attendance are even more successful
- working even more closely with some of your parents and carers to make sure you all attend school regularly.

You can help your school improve even further by making sure you come to school regularly and working with your teachers to achieve the very best you can.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Ann Wallis

Lead Inspector

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