

St Joseph's Catholic High School

Shaggy Calf Lane, Slough, Berkshire SL2 5HW

Inspection dates	12–13 January 2016
Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher and other senior leaders have transformed the culture of the school. They show clear and firm leadership and have supported staff and pupils to bring about improvements in all aspects of their work.
- Leaders are passionate about raising standards in the school. They have worked tirelessly to improve pupils' learning. Standards are rising quickly as a result.
- Pupils are proud of their school. They behave well around the school and in lessons. They are cheerful, polite, helpful and very supportive of each other.
- Pupils make good progress in English and mathematics. Teaching is good in most subjects because staff are committed to continually improving their practice.
- The gaps in achievement between disadvantaged pupils, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs and others are closing quickly.
- Learners make good progress in the sixth form as a result of good teaching and strong leadership.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Some pupils do not read widely. Sometimes teaching does not develop pupils' writing and speaking skills rapidly.
- Learners and pupils sometimes lack confidence and self-assurance and don't always challenge other people's ideas and views appropriately.
- The most able do not make consistently rapid progress in all subjects.
- Pupils' progress in science and design and technology is not as good as in other subjects.
- A minority of leaders are new to the school or have been recently appointed so that they have had little time to demonstrate the impact of their work.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the progress and standards of pupils in science and technology by ensuring that teachers:
 - use the school’s approaches to feedback and marking consistently and effectively
 - plan for the needs of groups of learners better, so that pupils make good progress from their different starting points.
- Develop teaching, learning and assessment further to support outstanding learning by ensuring that teaching:
 - uses consistent approaches to develop pupils’ writing skills across all subjects in the school
 - requires pupils to read more widely and frequently across all subjects
 - uses questioning to support pupils and learners to develop their confidence and curiosity
 - offers high levels of challenge and support to the most-able pupils.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The headteacher and his senior leaders have established very high expectations of staff and for all pupils and learners in the school. The headteacher has a deep-seated conviction and moral purpose that all pupils have a right to an excellent education and this belief drives a very positive culture in the school. All staff support this vision and are energised by the passion of the headteacher to do their best.
- Leaders know their school very well. They accurately evaluate its strengths and weaknesses and take effective action in response. As a result, the school has been transformed over the last two years. Pupils, parents and staff talk enthusiastically about the significant difference leaders have made. Staff describe the school now as 'a can do school thanks to the current leadership team'.
- The leadership of teaching is particularly strong. Leaders have developed a very effective mix of professional support for new teachers and development for those who are more experienced. There is a consistent approach to planning and assessment that enables teachers to carry out their work well and ensure that all pupils make good progress. Leaders manage staff performance very carefully so that good performance is rewarded and those that need extra support receive it. Other adults who support pupils are also managed well and receive good training so that they support pupils' learning very effectively.
- Middle leadership is good. These staff are well supported by senior leaders and contribute significantly to the improvements in the school. Middle leaders know and understand the strengths of their subjects well and describe confidently the approaches they take to address any areas for improvement. They are knowledgeable about the different needs of the pupils and how to cater for these so that all pupils can make good progress. They regularly share best practice and make good use of external partners to improve their work. There are a few leaders who are new to middle leadership, who, along with the leaders of science and technology, have not yet had time to make a significant impact.
- The pupil premium grant is used successfully. It funds a breakfast club that has improved attendance, punctuality and behaviour. Leaders have used this fund to support pupils with one-to-one tutoring, textbooks and other resources in science, mathematics and English. Leaders know every disadvantaged pupil well so that the funding is used efficiently in response to their individual needs. As a result, these pupils are making better progress than previously and closing gaps to more closely match the good performance of other pupils in the school.
- The curriculum meets the pupils' needs well. Leaders have radically changed how subjects are organised so that now all pupils have the chance to succeed. The Key Stage 3 curriculum is well balanced and offers flexibility. For example, when appropriate in Year 9, some pupils receive extra time for English. Leaders have also prioritised developing thinking skills so that pupils are better prepared for the examinations they will face in the future. At Key Stage 4, there are three pathways that enable pupils to choose a broad range of subjects as well as study the core subjects so that they are not at a disadvantage when they move on to further education, training or an apprenticeship.
- The ethos of the school is that all pupils, no matter what their background, ethnicity or religion, have a right to succeed. Leaders promote very high standards of conduct and respect so that pupils are secure and can focus on learning. For example, training has been provided for all staff to recognise any unacceptable language whether in English or other languages so that the atmosphere is calm and purposeful.
- Leaders rightly identified a previous lack of opportunity, knowledge and experience of different workplaces as a barrier for their pupils to progress to further study or employment. Consequently, they invested in gaining accreditation for the quality of the school's careers advice and guidance. As a result, they have developed a thorough and useful programme for all pupils to reflect on their futures. Pupils in Year 11 report that the advice and guidance they have received has been very helpful and prepares them well for the next stage of their education, employment or training.
- Both the local authority and the diocese have provided effective support to the school since the previous inspection. The local authority brokered additional leadership to support the school as well as developed the capacity of current leaders by working with two outstanding schools, a national leader in education and a specialist leader of education in mathematics. This support has made a significant contribution to the school's improvement. In addition, the diocese adeptly supported the governing body in appointing leaders and managed a challenging financial situation well.

■ The governance of the school

- Governance is good because governors know the school well. They have responded well to the advice and guidance from the diocese and the local authority. They have recognised where there are gaps in their understanding of important issues and recruited governors who are specialists, for example the appointment of a governor with responsibility for safeguarding who is an acknowledged leader in this field.
- Governors have established effective approaches to challenge and support the school's leaders. They visit the school frequently and are involved in school life. Moreover, they meet with teachers regularly and observe the practice of leaders so that they are better informed about the quality of teaching in the school. Governors are knowledgeable about the strengths and weaknesses of the school and have a good grasp of how the pupil premium funding is spent. They monitor the school's work and understand what information is most useful to them to challenge leaders so ask probing questions.
- Governors have developed a judicious approach to overseeing the school's management of staff performance that is rigorous and sensible. Above all, governors share leaders' ambitions and are equally committed to maintaining the ethos so that the school lives up to its mission of 'only the best being good enough'.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders and governors have established a strong culture of safeguarding. The school has very good systems that ensure that pupils are well cared for and that all staff have regular, high-quality training. Leaders are equally robust and tenacious in ensuring that other organisations work with them to carry out their responsibilities for vulnerable children to a high standard.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- The great majority of teaching is characterised by effective planning, high-quality feedback and high expectations for what pupils can achieve. Teachers create a positive climate for learning where pupils listen well to each other and are keen to succeed. The best teaching is exciting and challenges pupils so that they take risks and can develop a deeper understanding of key ideas. As a consequence of working at full-stretch, pupils develop a real relish for their subjects. This was especially the case in a Year 11 English lesson where the pupils worked on an activity with such vim and gusto that they rapidly produced work at the highest standards.
- Teaching in English is good. Pupils develop a secure understanding of key aspects of language and a knowledge of literature, as a result of the high expectations that teachers have for all pupils. Teachers have an excellent grasp of the demands of the curriculum and have adapted well to the recent changes, capitalising on its links with changes in assessment. They plan effectively so that it is clear what pupils must do. Work seen in books showed that pupils make good progress over time.
- Teaching is pacy and interesting in mathematics. Teachers build well on earlier learning. The school's approach to planning is used effectively to produce well-structured lessons. As a result, pupils gain a very good knowledge of mathematical skills and techniques. Teachers are beginning to develop new approaches to teaching problem-solving and reasoning. The subject leader for mathematics is effective in promoting mathematical thinking in all subjects and during tutor time by using social media in an innovative way.
- Teachers' subject knowledge is good and inspectors observed teachers using resources well to inspire and motivate pupils. There is a consistent approach to planning that means teachers set demanding tasks which, combined with high expectations, result in pupils generally doing well. In Year 9 geography, a range of activities were planned to develop pupils' understanding of the advantages and disadvantages of different energy sources. As a result of well-judged teaching, the pupils were able to analyse and evaluate solutions for different countries and share their summary recommendations confidently.
- When teaching is less effective, especially in science and design technology, teachers have less secure subject knowledge and do not apply school guidelines consistently. Consequently, pupils do not make as much progress as they should and they do not take as much pride in their work as in other subjects. The quality of questioning means that some pupils do not develop their ideas. This is especially the case for the most able.
- The majority of teachers use the school's marking policy well and are diligent in giving feedback. Pupils respond well to teachers' advice, appreciate the comments made and almost always commit to improving their work. Consequently, pupils develop a better grasp of the key ideas that they have been taught. Most teachers set homework that is useful and challenging and this contributes to the good progress that

pupils make.

- The explicit teaching of literacy is not consistently well established across the school. There are pockets of good practice, but some teachers do not set out clearly enough their expectations for writing or speaking. As a result, some pupils develop misconceptions and they fail to grasp key concepts. In addition, some teachers do not model how to write or speak for different purposes and different audiences. The school has recently developed its reading resources so that more pupils than previously are reading regularly but there are still some pupils who do not read often enough.
- The school promotes pupils' spiritual development very effectively. Pupils take part in regular collective worship, in retreats, and can use the school chapel to explore their beliefs. They learn about different faiths in religious studies and explore theories of evolution in science and ethics. Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain by following a well-thought-out tutor programme and studying a wide range of resources and topics in each subject that reflect cultural and religious diversity well.
- The school provides a range of opportunities for learning beyond the classroom. There are additional clubs after school that include sport, computing and art and a very active programme of enrichment with speakers from universities, local businesses and the local community. Recently, different pupils took part in activities as diverse as debating with the leader of the council, shadowing the local Member of Parliament in Westminster and playing drums with a member of a rock band.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- There are many opportunities for pupils to develop their leadership skills as house captains, prefects and members of the student council. Pupils also take part in subject focus groups that give leaders feedback on pupils' views about the quality of teaching in the school. This work links well with the leadership development programmes, for example the Duke of Edinburgh's Award, that pupils experience in Key Stages 3 and 4.
- The attendance of pupils is improving, with overall attendance well above the national average. There is increased rigour in addressing the low attendance of a minority of pupils so that the vast majority of pupils are punctual to school and to lessons. The attendance of different groups, including disadvantaged pupils, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, is monitored closely by leaders. The attendance of these groups is better than previously as a result.
- Exclusions for poor behaviour have reduced in frequency over the last three years. The school skilfully manages the behaviour of pupils who need extra support by investing in specialist staff, short tailor-made programmes and intervening earlier. As a result, disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs are excluded less often than in the previous years.
- The welfare of pupils is the highest priority for leaders. Pupils describe how they are well cared for, that they feel safe and are clear about which staff to go to if they have a concern. They report that any concerns are well managed by the school. There are clear systems to support pupils who are struggling with issues. The overwhelming majority of parents report that their child is happy and well looked after by the school. One parent reported that 'When I drop my children off in the morning on my way to work I have peace of mind knowing that they are safe, well looked after and well taught'.
- There is a well-developed programme for each year group to help pupils to keep themselves safe that includes internet safety, grooming and cyberbullying. There are regular visits by the police, youth services and other experts which pupils value highly. Pupils are tolerant of others and respectful of those who may look and act differently from themselves.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils report that there has been a sea-change in behaviour since the appointment of the headteacher. They describe how the 'five non-negotiables' are applied consistently by all teachers.
- Behaviour in lessons is good as pupils listen politely to others and also encourage each other to do well. However, pupils do not show confidence in speaking out or challenging the views of others. The school has begun to address this with a strategy that encourages pupils to develop resilience and build on misconceptions, 'FAIL – first attempt in learning', but this is not yet used explicitly enough in some

lessons.

- Pupils move calmly and purposefully around the building. At break and lunch they enjoy their time together and staff help to solve any problems quickly and calmly. They are respectful of each other, of staff and they warmly welcome visitors, for example by helpfully opening doors and greeting them formally.
- Pupils report that there is very little bullying and, when it does take place, staff respond well. They appreciate that staff are sensitive to the pupils' concerns and know that staff will spend time to resolve any problem that pupils have, however large or small.
- Pupils are smart in their appearance and very well presented. They take pride in their uniform and in the appearance of the school by not dropping litter and taking care when moving around the school.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- Pupils achieve well in English, mathematics and in many other subjects. This is as a result of effective teaching and appropriate intervention for those who need extra help. In 2015, pupils made very good progress across a wide range of subjects by the end of Key Stage 4. Current cohorts are also achieving well. Leaders have introduced a robust system to check how well pupils are learning. Current performance information shows that the vast majority of pupils are making good progress especially in mathematics and English. Parents receive regular updates on their children's progress which they value.
- Disadvantaged pupils achieve well and the gap between their achievement and that of other pupils nationally is narrowing. In 2015, the progress of disadvantaged pupils in mathematics and English exceeded the national average as a consequence of the effective measures put in place by leaders. The gap between these pupils' average grade and that of other pupils in the school was less than half a grade in English and just over half a grade in mathematics. Impressively, disadvantaged pupils exceeded the national average for achieving the English baccalaureate (Ebacc) which is a testament to the very good results pupils attain in modern foreign languages.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are supported well. By the end of Key Stage 4 they make the same progress as others in the school. However, the school recognise that in Key Stage 3 there are a few pupils who need extra help to do well. Leaders are focusing on improving the quality of teaching so that these pupils can catch up.
- The most-able pupils made good progress in 2015 and their outcomes were broadly in line with similar pupils nationally. However, almost all of them achieved the Ebacc, which is twice the national average. Most-able pupils make better progress in mathematics than in English at Key Stage 3 but less progress than other pupils at Key Stage 4 in some subjects. However, leaders are aware of this and are supporting teachers to challenge the most able so that they attain more of the highest grades.
- Many pupils are beginning to read more widely. A number of initiatives have recently started that include developing and broadening pupils' use of the library. However, only a quarter of pupils have taken books out of the library since September and there is a slow increase in the number of boys who read often and for pleasure. Some pupils have taken part in reading programmes and there is a useful scheme where sixth form learners mentor Year 7 readers. Many of these strategies are at an early stage but there is evidence of some impact.

16 to 19 study programmes

are good

- The leadership of the sixth form is strong. The head of sixth form is very well supported by senior leaders and is rapidly improving outcomes for learners. As a consequence, the numbers of learners in the sixth form have doubled in the last two years.
- Learners enter the sixth form with attainment that is below the national average. Previously, learners in the sixth form made progress broadly in line with expectations. The progress of current learners is improving and is now good. School information shows that they are on course to achieve better grades in academic qualifications than ever before. Although a smaller number of learners than average go on to university, everyone who applied last year got their first choice place and the vast majority were the first in their family to take part in higher education.
- The quality of teaching in the sixth form is good and it is supporting improving outcomes for learners. Teachers assess work accurately and use their knowledge of how well learners are doing to plan

effectively. As a result, learners move through the courses rapidly and successfully. Leaders value close relations with parents and have developed a variety of methods to keep parents informed of their child's current progress.

- Learners who did not achieve a grade C at GCSE in English or mathematics are supported effectively. A good proportion achieve this standard by the end of their time in the sixth form. The majority of learners who begin two-year courses complete them. A small number leave in Year 12 to go into employment or for personal reasons.
- There are strong links with other schools in Slough, and further afield, that help share best practice in careers advice and guidance. There are also good links with Eton College, which provides specialist support for learners who are interested in studying medicine at university as well as lectures on entrepreneurship and other topics.
- Learners are very involved in the broader life of the school and many undertake community work as sports ambassadors or 'reading buddies'. Over twelve thousand pounds has been raised to fund a mission to Thailand where sixth form learners plan to volunteer help and assistance in an orphanage.
- Learners in the sixth form attend well and are punctual to lessons. They experience a carefully constructed tutor programme that ensures everyone is well informed about equality and diversity as well as other aspects of fundamental British values.

School details

Unique reference number	110087
Local authority	Slough
Inspection number	10002322

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

Type of school	Secondary modern
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	767
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	101
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Theresa Oliver
Headteacher	Ciran Stapleton
Telephone number	01753 524713
Website	www.st-josephs.slough.sch.uk
Email address	office@st-josephs.slough.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	October 2013

Information about this school

- St Joseph’s Catholic High School is a smaller than average-sized secondary school with a sixth form.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and those who speak English as an additional language is much higher than average.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for pupils in local authority care, those known to be eligible for free school meals and children of service families, is below the national.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special education needs is above average.
- The school has been supported by a national leader of education, a specialist leader in education from St John the Baptist school and other support from the Salesian school.
- The school does not have any pupils in alternative education.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 39 lessons and three part lessons across all year groups and subjects. Some lessons were observed jointly with senior leaders.
- Inspectors held meetings with senior leaders and other staff. They took account of the 16 confidential questionnaires received from staff. They also met with governors, a representative from the local authority and the diocese.
- Inspectors evaluated key documents, including the school's strategic planning, minutes of meetings, reports of attendance and behaviour, and records related to pupils' safety and academic progress. They scrutinised work done in lessons.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour at break and lunchtimes, around the school and in assembly, tutor periods and other activities.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils formally and informally. Inspectors took account of the 34 anonymous responses from parents on Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View.

Inspection team

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Mark Bennison	Ofsted Inspector
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