

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



12 December 2018

Mr Ciran Stapleton
St Joseph's Catholic High School
Shaggy Calf Lane
Slough
Berkshire
SL2 5HW

Dear Ciran Stapleton

Short inspection of St Joseph's Catholic High School

Following my visit to the school on 4 December 2018 with Stuart Edwards, Ofsted Inspector, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The visit was the first short inspection carried out since the predecessor school was judged to be good in January 2016.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I am of the opinion that the school has demonstrated strong practice and marked improvement in specific areas. This may indicate that the school has improved significantly overall. Therefore, I am recommending that the school's next inspection be a section 5 inspection.

Your principled and determined leadership underpins a culture of impressive pastoral care and excellent academic standards. You are determined to provide high-quality education for all pupils regardless of their ability or circumstance. You are tenacious in your pursuit of excellence, while balancing your drive with the well-being of staff and pupils. Therefore, staff at the school trust and respect you and your leadership team. Morale is high at your inclusive school. Everyone at the school works together to support the strong Catholic ethos, which is the bedrock of the school.

You and your leadership team are ambitious for pupils and carefully consider their best interests in everything you do. However, your planning goes beyond ensuring that pupils leave with good examination results. Pupils' well-being, spiritual and personal development, including their mental health, has a high priority and is very well catered for at your school.

Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. They are courteous and respectful towards each other and teachers. They wear their uniform smartly and take good care of their school environment. Pupils are proud of their school and told inspectors that they

appreciate the wide variety of clubs and activities on offer. In lessons, we saw pupils work very hard and keep going when tasks were difficult. Pupils respond effectively to their teachers' regular and encouraging feedback. Pupils' work is exceptionally well presented and is of a consistently high standard. Nearly all pupils' attendance is excellent, and leaders are determined in supporting the very few pupils whose attendance needs to improve. One pupil, voicing the opinions of a group of pupils, said, 'The teachers are really good and happy. They make learning fun. You can always go to teachers for help.'

Leaders monitor the quality of teaching closely and check how well it contributes to pupils' strong progress. As a result, you, together with senior leaders and governors, have an accurate view of the school's many strengths and the very few areas where improvement is possible. For example, you know that, overall, pupils, including those whose circumstances make them vulnerable, continue to make very rapid progress. You also know the very few subjects, for example business studies, where progress is not quite as good as the best.

Pupils' progress is tracked meticulously so that teachers can provide prompt and effective help for pupils who are at risk of falling behind. For example, pupils in Years 7 and 8 who find reading difficult have reading mentors who give them extra help during tutor time. Leaders' current credible assessment information shows that these pupils rapidly improve their reading ability.

Governors provide strong challenge and support to you and other leaders. They visit the school regularly and analyse pupils' progress thoroughly. As a result, they have a good understanding the school's many strengths and areas where further improvement is possible. For example, they share with you an ambition to improve school buildings, for example by widening corridors and building more classrooms. Governors take a professional and reflective approach to their roles, for example by regularly attending relevant and up-to-date training. They are ambitious for the school and are working with you on exciting plans to expand your multi-academy trust to include more Catholic schools.

Pupils, parents and carers speak highly of the school, and nearly all parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, said that they would recommend the school to other parents. One commented that, 'My daughter is doing her first A-levels year at Saint Joseph's and she started in year 7. We love this school; a very good environment and awesome teachers.'

Safeguarding is effective.

Safeguarding is a strength of the school. The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. All records are detailed and of a high quality. Before appointing staff, leaders carry out all the required employment checks. These are then recorded meticulously on the school's single central register. All staff and governors receive regular training on how to keep children safe from abuse, sexual exploitation, radicalisation and extremism. There is a strong culture of vigilance and support to ensure that pupils are kept safe.

A team of dedicated staff works with sensitivity and determination alongside parents and carers and external agencies to support pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable. Parents say that their children feel safe in school. Pupils state that staff are approachable and that they know an adult that they can turn to if they have any worries.

The curriculum prepares pupils well for managing their own safety. Pupils said that they learn about how to keep safe and the importance of respecting the rights of others. Leaders are rightly planning activities to develop further key stage 3 pupils' understanding of the potential dangers of radicalisation and extremism.

Inspection findings

- During the inspection, we focused on the following lines of enquiry: is the sixth form curriculum well matched to the needs of students; how effectively are pupils prepared for their next steps at the end of key stage 4; and do pupils continue to make rapid progress in key stage 3 and key stage 4.
- The sixth form is led strongly and provides an inclusive and encouraging environment where students enjoy learning. The reputation of the sixth form has deservedly improved in recent years. As a result, the sixth form has rapidly increased in size. It is now a vibrant and viable sixth form. The carefully designed curriculum includes a wide range of academic courses that are well matched to students' abilities and aptitude. As a result, students achieve well and nearly all complete their studies. Leaders are appropriately planning to introduce more applied courses as the sixth form continues to grow.
- The recent A-level results showed that the students who sat their examinations in 2018 made impressive progress. Leaders' current assessments and work that inspectors saw in students' folders, showed that sixth-form students continue to make strong progress in a wide range of subjects. Students are successfully prepared for higher education, apprenticeships and employment. However, leaders are not complacent, and they are determined that sixth-form students achieve even greater success.
- Pupils receive regular and appropriate careers guidance. Vulnerable pupils are given additional help to ensure that they are not disadvantaged by their circumstances. There is well-planned careers education as part of the curriculum from Year 7. As a result, a much higher-than-average number of pupils successfully transfer to sustained education or training at the end of key stage 4 and key stage 5.
- Leaders' evaluation that pupils continue to make the same outstanding progress as they did in previous years is validated by teachers' credible assessment information and the high quality of work that inspectors saw in pupils' books. In the lessons we visited, inspectors saw pupils work with great enthusiasm and determination.
- Leaders place a high priority on training teachers to plan for the needs and abilities of all pupils. In lessons, inspectors saw convincing evidence of well-

considered lesson preparation by teachers who plan to enthuse and encourage pupils. As a result, we saw evidence that pupils make rapid progress. For example, in a Year 10 chemistry lesson we saw pupils working in groups to complete a complex practical activity and then appropriately challenge each other on the accuracy of their results.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- improvements in the progress of students in the sixth form are sustained.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees (academies) and the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the Director of Education for the Diocese of Northampton, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Slough. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Anne Turner
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

Inspectors met with you, leaders, governors and staff, and spoke to groups of pupils, both formally and informally. We visited lessons to observe pupils' learning, accompanied by senior leaders, and looked at the quality of work in pupils' books. My colleague and I observed pupils at breaktime and lunchtime. We considered documents about safeguarding, attendance, current pupils' progress and governors' work. The outcomes of the staff survey, and 105 responses to the Ofsted online survey, Parent View, were also considered.