

St Joseph's Catholic High School

Address: Shaggy Calf Lane, Slough, Berkshire, SL2 5HW

Unique reference number (URN): 143803

Inspection report: 6 May 2026

Exceptional	
Strong standard	●
Expected standard	● ● ● ● ● ●
Needs attention	
Urgent improvement	

✓ Safeguarding standards met

The safeguarding standards are met. This means that leaders and/or those responsible for governance and oversight fulfil their specific responsibilities and have established an open culture in which safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and concerns are actively identified, acted upon and managed. As a result, pupils are made safer and feel safe.

How we evaluate safeguarding

When we inspect schools for safeguarding, they can have the following outcomes:

- **Met:** The school has an open and positive culture of safeguarding. All legal requirements are met.
- **Not met:** The school has not created an open and positive culture of safeguarding. Not all legal requirements are met.

Strong standard ●

Attendance and behaviour

Strong standard ●

Pupils' attendance is above the national average, including for disadvantaged pupils. Pupils are also consistently punctual to school and to lessons. Leaders carefully monitor attendance and quickly identify pupils who have barriers to regular attendance. Leaders work well with families in overcoming pupils' individual barriers. Pupils want to attend school because they enjoy being part of the school's positive, nurturing community. Pupils also enjoy the numerous enrichment opportunities that the school provides for them. Indeed, pupils show pride in attending the school.

Leaders have created a calm environment around the school. Pupils are polite, courteous and highly respectful. Pupils develop positive relationships with staff, which makes pupils feel known and cared for. Pupils conduct themselves to a high standard and value their learning. In lessons, pupils follow instructions swiftly, listen attentively and want to do their best. Staff apply the school's behaviour policy fairly and consistently. As pupils move through the school, they manage their own behaviour with increasing maturity. Pupils reflect on and learn from their behaviour. Staff support pupils to build resilience. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported, through appropriate adjustments when needed, in meeting the school's expectations of pupils' behaviour. Bullying is rare. Incidents of bullying and discrimination are dealt with quickly and effectively.

Expected standard ●

Achievement

Expected standard ●

Pupils achieve well in their GCSE examinations. The school's key stage 4 outcomes are above or broadly in line with national averages. Pupils make effective progress, particularly pupils who begin school with lower starting points. Disadvantaged pupils typically achieve more highly than their peers nationally. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) typically achieve well from their differing starting points.

Sixth-form students achieve below the national average in A levels, but closer to the national average on vocational courses. Typically, sixth-form students are well prepared to progress on to their next steps in education, employment or training.

Pupils develop their reading skills so that they can access the curriculum and read fluently. This includes pupils with SEND, who receive the support they need. Leaders identify gaps in pupils' mathematical knowledge and older pupils are provided with additional interventions. Leaders know that there is further work to do in developing pupils' writing, especially their accuracy.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Pupils study a broad and ambitious curriculum. Leaders have identified the important knowledge that pupils need to learn. The curriculum sequences this important knowledge well so that pupils can build their knowledge effectively over time.

Leaders have a clear understanding of the quality of teaching and know where improvement is needed. Teachers give clear explanations and help pupils remember what they have previously learned. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) access the same curriculum as their peers. However, sometimes teachers do not provide pupils with SEND with precise-enough adaptations to the curriculum or teaching.

Leaders identify pupils who need additional help with their reading. These pupils are given effective support to become fluent readers, including support with phonics. Leaders also identify pupils with gaps in their mathematical knowledge. Typically, additional support for mathematics occurs at key stage 4. Generally, teachers address pupils' inaccuracies in writing as pupils progress through the school. However, leaders know this needs to be sharper and more consistent.

Teachers have secure subject knowledge. Generally, teachers check pupils' understanding and address pupils' misconceptions when they arise. However, sometimes teachers do not recognise gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding. As a result, sometimes pupils do not develop a deep and coherent enough body of knowledge.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

Inclusion is at the heart of the school. Leaders have an unwavering dedication to addressing the academic and social barriers to achievement that pupils may face. Pupils are well known at the school and feel a sense of belonging. Leaders work closely with families and professionals to put pupils' interests first. Staff provide well-considered and effective pastoral care for pupils.

There are high aspirations for what all pupils can achieve. Typically, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, alongside those known or previously known to social care, do very well in their examinations at GCSE. Leaders quickly identify pupils' needs and share relevant information with staff, including about appropriate strategies to meet pupils' specific needs. However, there is some variability in how effectively staff employ these strategies in the classroom.

Leaders' use of funding for disadvantaged pupils is well considered and appropriate. The school prioritises the participation of disadvantaged pupils in enrichment activities, and disadvantaged pupils achieve above the national average. However, leaders' evaluation of the impact of this funding on the opportunities and experiences of disadvantaged pupils, including with regard to alternative provision, could be more rigorous.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Leaders have an acute understanding of the context of the school and of the community that they serve. They share a clear vision for the school with governors and trustees. Leaders know the school's strengths and the school's areas for development. They select improvement priorities with pupils' best interests at heart. Leaders build staff expertise through coaching and align evidence-informed staff professional development to the school's improvement priorities. The trust provides the school with additional training for staff and opportunities for wider staff collaboration.

Trustees and local governors work in close partnership and share information effectively. They are clear about their roles and provide robust challenge and support in equal measure to school leaders. Trustees ensure that the school's statutory duties are met.

Staff are proud to work at the school and feel valued by leaders. Staff's workload and wellbeing are taken seriously by leaders. Leaders ensure that staff workload remains manageable at times of change to policy and practice. Staff understand the need to support leaders in implementing school improvement initiatives, although they note the increase in what is asked of them. Staff feel respected by senior leaders for the work they do in supporting the school's improvement.

Leaders and staff are tireless in their work to ensure that pupils have a successful education. Parents and carers are positive about the care given to their children, and many parents recognise the significance of the school's work on pupils' lives.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

Provision for pupils' personal development is a significant feature of school life. The school's personal development programme is informed both by the school's values and leaders' mission to promote pupils' self-belief. Staff support pupils' personal development through effective pastoral support that builds pupils' confidence and resilience.

Leaders have developed an extensive offer of enrichment activities that enables pupils to explore and develop their talents and interests. The programme includes a range of sports, alongside other activities such as Latin, chess, candle making and crochet. Pupils can also take part in The Duke of Edinburgh's Award. The school encourages pupils to serve the local community, engage with charity events and take pride in their accomplishments. Pupils take part in events to promote cultural awareness and visit different places of worship. While many pupils benefit fully from these enrichment opportunities, leaders could track participation more effectively and provide more targeted opportunities for some pupils, including disadvantaged pupils.

Personal, social and health education (PSHE) is taught through tutor time, assemblies and workshops. Pupils build a secure understanding of the fundamental British values. Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe, including online. All pupils receive age-appropriate relationships and sex education, including in the sixth form. Pupils learn about consent and the protected characteristics. Staff support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities to access PSHE lessons so that they can benefit from this important part of the school's curriculum.

The school provides pupils with appropriate careers education, advice and guidance. Pupils learn about different career pathways, including apprenticeships, university and employment. Pupils attend talks from employers and training providers that help them to understand their options and inform their decisions about next steps. Leaders are working on expanding their career provision, including providing work experience opportunities to further ready pupils for their next steps.

Post 16 provision

Expected standard 

The sixth form has grown substantially over the last few years, and leaders have developed an ambitious post-16 curriculum that includes both academic and vocational courses. The curriculum meets students' different needs and interests. Leaders review the curriculum regularly to ensure that it is providing students with an appropriately sequenced body of knowledge and skills across subjects. Leaders have identified where subjects need further development.

Teachers are subject experts and generally explain new concepts clearly. Students are given the support they need to secure their learning and understand how to improve their work. Students take their studies seriously and develop positive study habits. Typically, students achieve more highly in vocational qualifications than A levels, where they achieve below their peers nationally. However, students achieve qualifications that enable them to move on to their chosen next steps in education, training and employment. Indeed, their next steps are informed by careers talks and a careers fair .

Students enjoy an inclusive sixth-form learning environment and receive effective pastoral support from sixth-form staff. Relationships between staff and students are warm and respectful. Many students take on leadership roles or mentor their younger peers. Students take part in a range of enrichment activities and benefit from an age-appropriate personal development programme. At times, students could be further encouraged to develop their confidence and independence through deeper discussion about important issues in society.

What it's like to be a pupil at this school

The school is ambitious for its pupils. It provides a nurturing environment in which pupils feel safe and can develop and grow. Leaders have established a welcoming and caring community that prioritises pupils' wellbeing and achievement. Pupils rise to the expectations that the school sets for them. Pupils achieve well and are prepared for their next steps because staff support both pupils' academic and personal development.

Leaders work hard to help unlock pupils' talents. Pupils enjoy an enriched curriculum with an array of opportunities to explore and deepen their learning. Pupils take part in competitions, workshops, events and the 'electives' enrichment programme. These activities help pupils to develop their interests and build empathy for others. The school encourages pupils to take leadership roles, and sixth-form students mentor younger pupils. Leaders have built a school community that fosters respect and kindness.

Pupils thrive because they feel safe, cared for and included. Staff work together to support and care for pupils who may have barriers to their learning or wellbeing. Pupils follow well-established routines and instructions swiftly. They have positive relationships with staff. Conduct around the school site is calm and purposeful. Behaviour in class is highly conducive to learning. The school does not tolerate bullying and discrimination. If bullying or discrimination happen, leaders deal with these effectively. Pupils attend very well and enjoy their time at school.

Leaders provide a balanced and broad curriculum. Teachers ably support pupils to develop their knowledge and skills. Leaders understand pupils' barriers to learning well. Generally, pupils achieve well, especially in GCSEs. While some adaptations and adjustments could be further improved, disadvantaged pupils achieve highly. Students in the sixth form secure the qualifications they need to progress on to their next steps in education, employment or training.

Next steps

- Leaders should strengthen how teachers check pupils' understanding so that misconceptions are addressed more precisely, and that they deepen pupils' knowledge, including when teaching the personal development curriculum.
 - Leaders should build on their approach to pupils' writing so that expectations are high across the curriculum and pupils consistently develop the accuracy of their writing skills.
 - Leaders should ensure that the adaptations and adjustments pupils need are consistently in place to a high standard so that they develop their learning to the depth that they are capable of.
 - Leaders should further support sixth-form students' readiness for their next steps, through both the progress they make and through their personal development programme in making them resilient and confident.
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About this inspection

This school is part of St Thomas Catholic Academies Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Mark McLaughlin, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by George Brzyski.

Inspectors carried out this full inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Following our renewed inspection framework, all inspections are now led by His Majesty's Inspectors (HMIs) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMIs.

Inspectors spoke with the headteacher, senior leaders, the chief executive officer and representatives of the trust, governing body and the diocese, as well as staff and pupils during the inspection.

The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about the school:

This school is registered as having a Roman Catholic religious character. It is in the Diocese of Northampton. The school's last section 48 inspection was in April 2025.

The school currently makes use of 2 alternative provisions, including one that is unregistered.

The school has undergone a significant change since the last inspection, with a new headteacher, new chair of the trust and new chief executive officer of the trust.

Headteacher: Kelly Riddles

Lead inspector:

Sarah Saunders, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Mary Davies, Ofsted Inspector

Karlene Dampha, Ofsted Inspector

Caroline Lowing, Ofsted Inspector

Tash Hurtado, His Majesty's Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

The data was used by the inspector(s) during the inspection. More recent data may have been published since the inspection took place.

 This data is from 6 May 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

992

Close to average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils currently at this school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 1,067

School capacity

800

Below average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils who can attend the school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 1,154

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

12.23%

Well below average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years.

National average: 28.9%

Pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan

3.33%

Close to average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan. This covers pupils with more support than is available through special educational needs support.

National average: 3.09%

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

11.29%

Close to average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with reported special educational support needs at the school.

National average: 13.4%

Location deprivation

Above average

What does this mean?

Based on the English Indices of Deprivation (2019) and the school's location, we have calculated whether the school is located in a more or less deprived area.

Resourced Provision or SEND Unit (if applicable)

No resourced provision

What does this mean?

Whether school has Resourced Provision or SEND unit (if applicable).

All pupils' performance

English and maths GCSE

Percentage of pupils who achieved grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (final)	43.4%	45.4%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	49.3%	45.9%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	49.4%	45.3%	Close to average

Attainment 8

A measure of pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (final)	50.1	46.1	Close to average

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	50.5	45.9	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	50.4	46.3	Close to average

Progress 8

How much progress pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	0.45	-0.03	Above
2022/23 (final)	0.37	-0.03	Above

Disadvantaged pupils' performance

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after.

Disadvantaged pupils' English and maths GCSE grade 5 or above

Percentage of disadvantaged pupils achieving grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (final)	20.0%	25.8%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	55.6%	25.8%	Above
2022/23 (final)	23.5%	25.2%	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils' Attainment 8

A measure of disadvantaged pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (final)	44.5	34.9	Above
2023/24 (final)	45.6	34.6	Above
2022/23 (final)	40.9	35.0	Above

Disadvantaged pupils' Progress 8

How much progress disadvantaged pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	0.20	-0.57	Above
2022/23 (final)	-0.06	-0.57	Above

Disadvantaged pupils' performance gap

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after. The school disadvantage gap is the difference between the performance of the school's disadvantaged pupils compared to the performance of all non-disadvantaged pupils nationally.

Disadvantaged pupils' English and maths GCSE grade 5 or above

Percentage of disadvantaged pupils who achieved grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2024/25 (final)	20.0%	53.1%	-33.1 pp
2023/24 (final)	55.6%	53.1%	2.4 pp
2022/23 (final)	23.5%	52.4%	-28.9 pp

Disadvantaged pupils' Attainment 8

A measure of disadvantaged pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2024/25 (final)	44.5	50.4	-6.0
2023/24 (final)	45.6	50.0	-4.4
2022/23 (final)	40.9	50.3	-9.4

Disadvantaged pupils' Progress 8

How much progress disadvantaged pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2023/24 (final)	0.20	0.16	0.03
2022/23 (final)	-0.06	0.17	-0.23

Destinations after 16

Destinations after 16

Percentage of pupils staying in education or employment for at least 2 terms after the end of secondary school (key stage 4).

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023 leavers (revised)	94%	92%	Average
2022 leavers (revised)	98%	93%	Above
2021 leavers (revised)	98%	94%	Above

16 to 18 performance

A-level average point score

The average points that students achieved per A-level entry.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (final)	27.79	35.00	Below
2023/24 (final)	29.82	34.38	Below
2022/23 (final)	25.83	34.16	Below

A-level value added

A score showing students' progress between the end of key stage 4 and the end of their academic qualification studies.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (final)	-0.1	0.0	Close to average
2023/24 (revised)	0.2	0.0	Above

Absence

Overall absence

The percentage of all possible mornings and afternoons missed due to absence from school (for whatever reason, whether authorised or unauthorised) across all pupils.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (3 term)	4.8%	8.4%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	5.3%	8.9%	Below
2022/23 (3 term)	6.8%	9.0%	Below

Persistent absence

The percentage of pupils missing 10% or more of their possible mornings and afternoons.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (3 term)	10.5%	23.4%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	11.9%	25.6%	Below
2022/23 (3 term)	19.9%	26.5%	Below

Our grades explained

Exceptional

Practice is exceptional: of the highest standard nationally. Other schools can learn from it.

Strong standard

The school reaches a strong standard. Leaders are working above the standard expected of them.

Expected standard

The school is fulfilling the expected standard of education and/or care. This means they are following the standard set out in statutory and non-statutory legislation and the professional standards expected of them.

Needs attention

The expected standards are not met but leaders are likely able to make the necessary improvements.

Urgent improvement

The school needs to make urgent improvements to provide the expected standard of education and/or care.

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

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