

Inspection of St Joseph's Catholic Academy

Mill Lane, Hebburn, Tyne and Wear NE31 2ET

Inspection dates: 27 and 28 September 2022

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Sixth-form provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

Leaders have improved the school. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), benefit from studying an ambitious curriculum and from having dedicated lessons that help them to develop as individuals. The school experience, built around a strong Catholic ethos, prepares pupils and students well for their future.

There is a settled atmosphere in lessons and around school. Lessons are purposeful. Poor behaviour rarely disrupts life in school. Pupils value their teachers and pastoral staff. The house system gives pupils stability. It helps them to feel safe and comfortable in school. Bullying is rare. Leaders have taught pupils what bullying is and how to report it. Pupils have faith that heads of house and other staff would deal with any bullying if it did occur.

Diversity is celebrated in school. Pupils talk confidently about how European languages week and Black History Month have broadened their horizons. Students in the sixth form play an active role in supporting younger pupils.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders have built a curriculum that develops pupils' cultural capital. For example, the art curriculum exposes pupils to a wealth of different artists and genres. In English, pupils study important and increasingly ambitious texts. Pupils with SEND receive effective support to access the same curriculum as their peers. The curriculum is well designed. It develops and deepens pupils' knowledge of the subjects that they study.

Teachers have good subject knowledge. Sixth-form students studying vocational qualifications particularly benefit from the expertise of staff. Teachers explain new knowledge clearly. They effectively adapt their teaching to help pupils with SEND. Teachers regularly support pupils to revisit previous knowledge. This helps pupils to remember what they have learned in the past.

Leaders have invested time in training staff on the use of assessment. As a result, teachers routinely check that pupils have understood what they have been taught. Teachers typically give further explanations when they identify that some pupils have misconceptions. However, some teachers do not then follow this up to make absolutely sure that pupils have understood and are ready to move on with their learning.

Pupils who need help with reading get the right support. Leaders think intelligently about grouping pupils to address their individual reading needs. For example, leaders identified that some female pupils were reluctant to read out loud. Leaders have put in place additional opportunities for these pupils to read to an adult outside

of lessons. As a result, they are growing in confidence and becoming more fluent readers.

The sixth form prepares students well for future success. Students progress to meaningful education, employment and training destinations. The personal development offer in the sixth form helps students prepare for adulthood. For example, the school's catering staff deliver lessons to students on how to cook meals on a budget. Leaders put in place bespoke packages of support for students with SEND. This means that they are well prepared for independent living when they leave school.

Pupils behave well. The routines around school are well understood. Incidents of poor behaviour have reduced over time. Lessons are rarely disrupted. Pupils who have been suspended from school in the past understand that their actions have consequences. They feel fairly treated and well supported to improve their behaviour.

Leaders place great emphasis on pupils' personal development. Many aspects of this programme are well embedded. For example, the curriculum develops pupils' understanding of different cultures and faiths. There are meaningful opportunities to debate moral dilemmas. Pupils speak with authority about the difference between right and wrong. Leaders have established a rich careers programme from Year 7 to Year 13. However, leaders have not taken suitable steps to fully assure themselves that pupils remember the important knowledge that they gain from personal, social and health education (PSHE) lessons.

Leaders and those responsible for governance have improved the school. Leaders' actions have united staff. They feel supported with their workload and well-being. Governors and trustees hold leaders to account effectively.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have ensured well-established systems to report and record safeguarding concerns. Staff are well trained. Regular updates from leaders and external training keep staff's safeguarding knowledge up to date. Staff know about emerging safeguarding risks in the local area and how to spot that pupils might be vulnerable to harm. When concerns are raised by staff, leaders take swift action. This includes involving external agencies as appropriate.

Pupils know that their head of house would support them if they needed help. Pupils value the mental health support that is available in school.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some teachers do not use assessment consistently well in lessons. Although teachers pick up on pupils' misconceptions, sometimes teachers do not adapt their teaching well enough to fully address gaps in pupils' knowledge. This means that pupils are occasionally moved on to new learning too quickly. Leaders should ensure that all teachers use assessment deftly to inform their teaching and help pupils to embed key concepts.
- There is not a robust system in place to check what pupils know and remember from the school's PSHE programme. Consequently, leaders are not able to assure themselves that pupils have learned important PSHE knowledge. Leaders should ensure that a system is developed which allows them to fully evaluate the effectiveness of the PSHE programme.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	139878
Local authority	South Tyneside
Inspection number	10241162
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,310
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	181
Appropriate authority	Board of Trustees
Chair of trust	Daniel O'Mahoney
Headteacher	Peter Mitchell
Website	www.stjosephs.uk.net
Date of previous inspection	30 and 31 January 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is a Roman Catholic Academy. The most recent section 48 inspection was conducted in March 2019. The next section 48 inspection is due by July 2024.
- The school is part of the Bishop Chadwick Catholic Education Trust.
- A very small number of pupils attend alternative provision. The school uses one registered and one unregistered alternative provider.
- The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, deputy headteacher and other senior and middle leaders. The lead inspector spoke with the chief executive officer of the trust by telephone. An inspector also held a telephone conversation with a representative from the diocese of Hexham and Newcastle.
- The lead inspector held a virtual meeting with members of the board of trustees, including the chair and vice chair. They also met with the chair of the local governing committee and some governors.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, history, languages and art and design. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of their work. Inspectors also visited a sample of lessons in science, business studies, sociology, hair and beauty, engineering, design technology, health and social care and physical education.
- Inspectors spoke to the leader for reading, observed reading support and visited tutor groups undertaking reading activities. An inspector also visited some support sessions for pupils with SEND.
- The lead inspector met with the designated safeguarding leader to discuss the arrangements for safeguarding. This included reviewing the school's safeguarding logs, referrals to external agencies and the school's single central record. Inspectors also spoke with teachers, non-teaching staff and pupils about their safeguarding knowledge throughout the inspection.
- Inspectors met with the leaders responsible for behaviour and attendance. Inspectors spoke with pupils and staff about behaviour in school and reviewed the school's behaviour records. An inspector also met with pupils who had been previously suspended from school. Inspectors also observed break and lunchtime arrangements.
- Inspectors met with a range of leaders to discuss the school's personal development programme. They spoke to groups of pupils, including sixth-form students, about personal development, including relationships and sex education.
- Throughout the inspection, inspectors spoke formally and informally with pupils and staff. This included meeting early career teachers and their mentors.
- An inspector held telephone conversations with representatives from the two alternative provisions used by the school.
- A range of school documentation was reviewed, including the school's self-evaluation and minutes from meetings of the local governing committee.
- The views of parents, staff and pupils received through Ofsted's surveys were also considered.

Inspection team

Graham Findlay, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Jonathan Ferstenberg	Ofsted Inspector
Erica Hiorns	Ofsted Inspector
Toni Spoons	Ofsted Inspector
Thomas Wraith	His Majesty's Inspector

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