

St Joseph's RC High School and Sports College

Chorley New Road, Horwich, Bolton, BL6 6HW

Inspection dates 2–3 June 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The school is very well led by an insightful headteacher who has a razor-sharp focus on high aspirations and achievement for all students.
- Recent appointments to senior and middle leadership have strengthened the school's capacity for further, sustained and embedded improvement.
- The use of data and systems to better inform on students' progress and performance across the school have been strengthened and are now good.
- Students have high expectations for themselves and espouse a culture of hard work coupled with a zest for learning. Their behaviour is outstanding and safety good.
- Teaching is improving and is now good. Consequently, all groups of students are making better progress.
- Gospel values pervade the school's day-to-day work and contribute to a harmonious and increasingly vibrant educational community.
- Governors have worked hard to embrace the direction taken by the headteacher. They know the school well and are both supportive and challenging of school leadership and performance.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- There is not enough consistently outstanding teaching and learning.
- The gap between the achievement of disadvantaged students and their peers needs to be fully closed.
- The school curriculum does not yet fully meet the needs of lower ability students.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed a wide range of subjects taught across the school to different age groups. Several lessons were observed jointly with members of the senior leadership team.
- Inspectors looked closely at samples of students' written work across a range of subjects and year groups. They also watched behaviour around the school.
- Inspectors held meetings with senior and middle leaders, groups of teachers, and five groups of students. Inspectors met with the Chair of the Governing Body and seven other governors. Inspectors also met with a representative of the local authority and the school improvement partner.
- Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of documentation including: self-evaluation and development plans; data relating to students' attainment and progress; information on attendance; documents and records about behaviour and safeguarding; records of the monitoring of teaching and learning and of performance management and minutes of meetings of the governing body.
- Inspectors reviewed the 106 responses to the Ofsted on-line questionnaire (Parent View), alongside the school's own records of parental and student feedback. They also took account of 53 questionnaires completed by staff.

Inspection team

Patrick Geraghty, Lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Pamela Hemphill	Additional Inspector
Janet Pruchniewicz	Additional Inspector
Anthony Nicholson	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St Joseph's High School and Sports College is a smaller than average-sized secondary school.
- The proportion of disadvantaged students, those eligible for support through the pupil premium, is well below the national average. The pupil premium is additional funding for those students who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is well below the national average.
- The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is well below the national average.
- The proportion students who are disabled or who have special educational needs is below the national average.
- In 2013/14 the school met the government's current floor standards which are the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress by the age of 16.
- The school does not enter students for GCSE examinations earlier than the usual time.
- A small number of students are currently in alternative provision under Hospital Home School Tuition.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that actions taken to accelerate attainment and achievement further impact so that:
 - the attainment and achievement gap between disadvantaged students and their peers is closed
 - the most able students achieve to and beyond their expectations
 - lower-ability students follow a curriculum that fully meets their needs and maximises their qualifications and skills possibilities.
- Ensure that the high expectations, ambitions and positive attitudes of students to embrace learning are met by:
 - all teaching being at least good and a greater percentage being outstanding
 - giving students additional challenges in class work, in extended work and in extra-curricular provision so that they are enabled to excel, improve their thinking and oracy skills and become the best learners that they can possibly be.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- This is a good and improving school. It is led by an incisive, astute and gifted headteacher with a compelling vision of school improvement based on developing a culture of high aspirations and ambition for all. At its core lies a commitment to gospel values which are lived out daily in the life and work of the school. Its students are lively, inquisitive, engaging and committed to a strong work and learning ethos; they are the key strength of this increasingly vibrant learning community.
- The headteacher, who took up post in September 2013, has brought about rapid change to school management. New key appointments have strengthened the senior leadership and middle leadership teams.
- Senior leadership is still evolving but is increasingly supportive of the new direction engaged by the headteacher. Middle leaders are supportive of change and have worked hard to bring about that change. While there is an improvement trend across all provision the pace of improvement remains variable between different subject areas.
- Data management and evaluation have been sharpened. There is a strong focus on tracking, monitoring and evaluating the progress of all students. Interventions to accelerate individual student progress and learning needs are swift and well focused.
- Self-evaluation is comprehensive and accurate. Strengths are recognised and built upon. Areas for improvement are correctly identified and clear action plans formulated to bring about required improvements.
- Performance management is robust. High levels of accountability are balanced by quality developmental and coaching support. School appraisal systems are thorough.
- The management of teaching and learning is good. The new senior leader with responsibility for this area brings a sharp eye to the improvement of teaching and learning through very well-focused continuous professional development. School data indicates significant improvements in the quality of teaching and learning across the school within the last year. Observations and work scrutiny by inspectors confirmed this improving trend.
- The curriculum has been reshaped to provide both a strong and broad academic focus at Key Stage 4. Provision at Key Stage 3 is now better informed by working in partnership with feeder primary schools. School leaders acknowledge that further work is required to enhance the curriculum for lower ability students so as to enable them to achieve the very best possible results.
- Careers education is thorough and well-developed at Key Stage 4. The school buys into the local connexions services as well as offering supplementary events and support.
- Religious education provision is a strength of the school. The integration of gospel values across all subjects is impressive and greatly contributes to the personal and social development of the students. The school provides the students with a rich grounding in and understanding of British values such as citizenship and responsibility within a democratic society. It also ensures that all pupils have equal opportunities in all aspects of school life.
- The focus of pupil premium funding has been sharpened and consequently it is having a greater impact in closing the gap between disadvantaged students and their peers. The planning of pupil premium initiatives takes into account best national practice. However, individual pupil premium initiatives and activities are not yet specifically evaluated for impact.
- External individuals and groups are used well to further strengthen the quality of the school's work and its care for its students. Relations are very positive with the local authority, which makes a strong contribution to the school improvement agenda. The school works positively within the Bolton Learning Alliance to share best practice and in seeking ways and means to promote high quality secondary provision.
- Appropriate communications are maintained with parents. Generally, parents are highly supportive of the school. A few parents raised concerns about student behaviour and the direction of the school. Inspectors found no substantive evidence to confirm their apprehensions.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Since the appointment of the new headteacher, governors have also been on a journey of change and reappraisal of their roles. They have developed an improved understanding of data and school performance trends. They now offer both robust and supportive challenge to senior leaders. Governors are highly supportive of the changes brought about by the headteacher.

- Governors have a good oversight of finance, including how pupil premium monies are allocated and how they contribute to improving the achievement and educational experience of disadvantaged students.
- Governors frequently visit the school to engage with leaders, middle leaders, teachers and students. They are aware of the strengths and areas for improvement, particularly in relation to teaching and learning.
- Governors monitor performance management well. Governors articulate well their high ambitions for the school.
- Governors ensure that safeguarding procedures meet statutory requirements.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students is outstanding. Students' behaviour in lessons is exemplary. They are highly engaged in, and very ambitious, with regard to their learning and the progress they make.
- Students set themselves high targets and seek actively the ways and means to both achieve them and then excel beyond them. They want the school to offer them more opportunities to enhance and develop their learning possibilities. One boy astutely summed up the views of all that 'It's not cool to mess about here; it's cool to work hard.'
- Inspectors were struck with the mature manner in which students discussed gospel values and their impact upon the school, their lives and the wider community. They are involved in many community and parish related activities.
- Students are keen to assume responsibility. Students are polite, inquisitive and engaging with adults, including visitors. They work cooperatively to support each other.
- Senior leaders acknowledge that the challenge for the school is to meet the high expectations espoused by the students.

Safety

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good. Students say they feel secure and safe in lessons and around the campus.
- Students commented that incidences of bullying were rare but if they occurred they were dealt with quickly and effectively. Students are made aware of the different forms of bullying, including cyber-bullying and racist and homophobic bullying.
- Through the curriculum and tutorial provision students develop an understanding of how to keep safe, and this includes such aspects as radicalisation and child sexual exploitation.
- Excellent relationships between staff and students ensure a trusting, cooperative and highly positive school environment.
- Safety procedures are well established around the school, including in science laboratories and design and technology workplaces. Students are well informed on safety procedures and practices.
- Positive students' attitudes are demonstrated by high attendance and punctuality.
- A significant majority of parents responding to questionnaires expressed confidence that their sons and daughters are safe in school and cared for well.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching and learning are consistently good. Lessons are well planned. Students are very engaged and at their most enthusiastic when activities are challenging and push the boundaries of their knowledge. In such lessons, teacher questioning elicits deeper thinking and understanding.
- Students demonstrate good co-operative skills when working in groups or in pairs. Well-developed and productive group activities were observed in English, where students excelled in cooperative tasks and all made very good progress. The development of good independent and research skills was observed in history, where students relished the examination and evaluation of source materials.
- Teachers now have a sharper focus on the progress of all students and are quick to recognise where additional intervention is required.
- In a few lessons, students are not sufficiently challenged and questioning to develop understanding tends to be superficial. In these lessons, the challenge of learning or opportunities to develop deeper

understanding do not match students' expectations.

- Senior leaders recognise that the high level of students' expectations offers a challenge to all teachers in their planning and organisation of class room and additional activities. While teaching and learning is good, there is not enough consistently outstanding teaching and learning over time.
- Marking of students' exercise books and assignment work is frequent. Teachers give good pointers to the next steps in understanding and students respond keenly to teachers' comments and advice.
- Very good relationships between teachers and students ensure positive learning environments.
- Literacy and numeracy are well promoted across the curriculum. Book discussion events have become a regular activity at lunchtimes and are enthusiastically welcomed by students. A number of students expressed a wish for a more proactive and developed library facility to further promote reading and specialist and higher order study.
- Teaching assistants are used well to promote learning and understanding.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students' achievement is good. Students enter the school with prior attainment significantly above average. In 2013/14 the attainment for 5 GCSE grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, was significantly above the national average. Students performed particularly well in history, religious education and French.
- Over time, disadvantaged students have made less progress than others in the school. At the end of Year 11 in 2014, disadvantaged students were half a GCSE grade behind their peers in school in GCSE English and a full grade in GCSE mathematics. Compared with their peers nationally this represents less than half a grade behind in GCSE English and three-quarters of a grade behind in GCSE mathematics.
- In 2013/14 disadvantaged students in GCSE English were 6% behind their peers in expected progress made and 10% behind in more than expected progress made. In GCSE mathematics, disadvantaged students were 21% behind their peers in expected progress, although only 4% behind in more than expected progress.
- From his appointment, the headteacher has had a robust focus on closing gaps in attainment and achievement. Strategies are now impacting and gaps are closing rapidly. Current school data indicates a significant closing of the attainment and progress gap in both English and mathematics for disadvantaged students.
- The progress of disabled students or those with special educational needs in 2013/14 was in line with the progress made by their peers.
- In 2013/14, some of the most able students did not make the progress expected or exceed the progress expected. Current school data indicates that the most able students are now making better progress because of changes to the curriculum and additional enhancement provision.
- Work scrutinised by inspectors and progress reviewed in observed lessons confirmed these improving trends for both disadvantaged students and the most able.
- Year 7 students who join the 'catch-up' programme are making better progress in their literacy because of the additional support they receive.
- A very small number of students who are recovering from illness are educated at home under the auspices of Hospital Home School Tuition. This provision is effectively monitored and students will be reintegrated into the school at an appropriate time.
- From the 2013/14 cohort all students progressed into education, employment or training after leaving school. The majority of students successfully applied for the most prestigious sixth form colleges locally.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	105262
Local authority	Bolton
Inspection number	448277

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	845
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	William Charnley
Headteacher	Richard Woods
Date of previous school inspection	10 March 2010
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