



## St Joseph's Catholic College

URN: 136980

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Bishop of Clifton

15 April 2026 – 16 April 2026

### Summary of key findings

#### Overall effectiveness

The overall quality of Catholic education provided by the school

#### Catholic life and mission (p.3)

How faithfully the school responds to the call to live as a Catholic community at the service of the Church's educational mission

#### Religious education (p.5)

The quality of curriculum religious education RE

#### Collective worship (p.7)

The quality and range of liturgy and prayer provided by the school

The school is fully compliant with the general norms for religious education laid down by the Bishops' Conference

The school is fully compliant with any additional requirements of the diocesan bishop

The school has responded to the areas for improvement from the last inspection

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Yes

Yes

Fully

## What the school does well

- St Joseph's Catholic College is a special place to work and there is a clear spirit of collaboration between staff.
- A profound sense of community is evident within the school and is reflected in the quality of relationships throughout.
- Students demonstrate a genuine respect for the school's rich diversity and foster a real sense of unity and pride within the school community reflecting its inclusive Catholic ethos.
- There is a strong culture of aspiration in religious education where students are encouraged to succeed and are supported well to enable them to do so.
- Prayer and liturgy is central to school life and has a powerful and very beneficial influence on it.

## What the school needs to improve

- Review the mission statement for the school following the extensive work undertaken to develop Catholic social teaching to accurately reflect the current position of the school.
- Ensure systems are in place to support all groups of learners to achieve in line with expectation, particularly boys at Key Stage 4.
- Develop a consistent approach to tutor time prayer so that there is always a spirit of reverence.

## Catholic life and mission

How faithfully the school responds to the call to live as a Catholic community at the service of the Church's educational mission.

### Catholic life and mission key judgement grade

#### Pupil outcomes

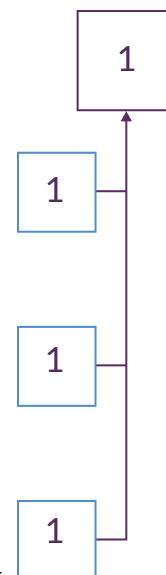
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

#### Provision

The quality of provision for the Catholic life and mission of the school

#### Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life and mission of the school



St Joseph's Catholic College is a school which puts Christ at the centre of every aspect of school life. 'Laus Deo Semper – Praise God Always' is the school motto and this is reflected through students' commitment and collaborative approach to youth SVP, the Year 10 youth diocesan programme, chaplaincy team and the school parliament. Students demonstrate a genuine respect for the school's rich diversity and foster a real sense of unity and pride within the school community reflecting its inclusive Catholic ethos. They speak enthusiastically about the school's culture days and how these develop their own understanding of other cultures and traditions. Students thrive through the exploration of Catholic social teaching linked to gospel values. Consequently, they are provided with the theology and opportunity to live their faith in practice. Students see themselves as part of an active faith community and respond extremely positively to the call to service and recognise how helping others enriches them in their own lives. The school benefits greatly from the work of the chaplaincy team. Prayer punctuates daily life and students participate willingly in prayer at the beginning of every lesson. Nearly all students know what is expected of them to ensure that they can learn in a purposeful way.

A profound sense of community is evident within the school and is reflected in the quality of relationships throughout. This supportive and loving environment embodies an unwavering commitment to uplifting the most vulnerable members of the school community. The Aquinas Centre provides a nurturing, caring and bespoke curriculum to support the needs of students. All students are inclusively part of the Catholic life of the school and consequently feel a genuine sense of care. The pastoral care of students is outstanding and allows students to

flourish. Staff commitment at all levels is exceptional. They readily serve the community and participate willingly in activities and routines which promote the school's high expectations and standards – especially those which reinforce Catholic social teaching. Parents regard the school highly as evidenced through the overwhelmingly positive parental questionnaires. They speak eloquently with one parent commenting that 'my son started in September and was quickly made to feel comfortable and safe in school', and another saying, 'I chose this school because of the strong Catholic ethos and feel my child's education has been enhanced by this'. However, a small minority of parents would like the school to be more explicitly Catholic in its nature and outlook.

Leaders and governors have a shared understanding of their responsibilities in leading a community of faith – 'One vision, One team, One St Joseph's'. Students' views are regularly sought, and they are readily involved in shaping the Catholic life and mission of the school. This fosters an environment of mutual respect and support for everyone within the school. Collaborative relationships with the Little Way Catholic Education Trust (LWCET) and the Diocese of Clifton ensure that the school remains aligned to its Catholic mission. St Joseph's Catholic College now has a flourishing partnership with local primary schools, with a well-established transition programme that embeds its ethos of welcome and inclusivity from an early stage. Governors and leaders enthusiastically support new staff induction which encourages full participation in the school's Catholic life and mission. One training day is used each year to develop teachers' understanding of Catholic values and ethos, for example, 'Pilgrims of Hope' and 'A Legacy of Love'. Consequently, staff speak eloquently about what their faith means to them on both a practical and personal level. The work on Catholic social teaching has had a notable impact on the whole community. Therefore, the mission statement needs to be reviewed to more accurately reflect the current position of the school.

## Religious education

How faithfully the school responds to the call to live as a Catholic community at the service of the Church's educational mission.

### Religious education key judgement grade

#### Pupil outcomes

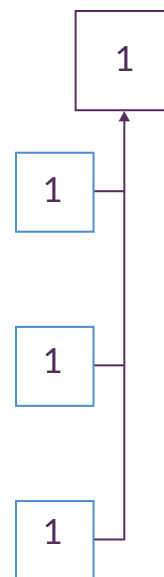
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

#### Provision

The quality of teaching, learning, and assessment in religious education

#### Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for religious education



Students enjoy their learning in religious education and engage well in a variety of well-planned activities. Clearly embedded routines across the department enable learning to flow seamlessly in lessons from when the students enter the classroom with 'do now activities', to different phases of learning to extended writing tasks. Students explain coherently how they make connections between religious education and everyday life. For example, in one lesson students were able to make links between Catholic social teaching by exploring what Catholic charities do and how they can put this into practice in their school community. Students treat each other with respect, and all listen attentively when discussing religious concepts and alternative views. Behaviour in lessons is exemplary. Work is appropriately adapted to meet the needs of all students, and they are challenged effectively in their learning throughout the lesson. Great emphasis is successfully placed on religious literacy and students are confident in using religious vocabulary in their written and oral work, demonstrating their ability to reflect spiritually and ethically on what they have learned. Outcomes in religious education at Key Stage 4 are consistently above those achieved nationally. However, boys' attainment is below that achieved by girls.

The religious education department is a dedicated team and have a deep commitment to the subject. There is a strong culture of aspiration where students are encouraged to succeed and are supported well to enable them to do so. Teachers ensure that high standards of learning and teaching are maintained in all aspects of their work and are confident in their subject knowledge. Teaching is well sequenced which supports students in developing secure and

progressively sophisticated understanding of scripture, tradition and the living teachings of the church. Knowledge is systematically built over time which enables students to make meaningful connections to religious concepts. Students confidently apply their knowledge to contemporary issues including those formed by Catholic social teaching. Lessons have good pace and challenge which ensures that students remain focussed throughout the lesson. Positive, warm relationships in class generate a strong sense of belonging and as a result students are confident when answering questions and contributing to discussion. The consistency of marking across the department ensures that 'green pen marking' is a regular feature across all key stages. Most students respond to the feedback given. However, there are a few examples where students have not fully engaged with the feedback to improve their work appropriately.

St Joseph's Catholic College is a special place to work and there is a clear spirit of collaboration between staff. The subject leader is a highly reflective practitioner who is fully aware of the strengths of the department and areas for improvement. Learning walks, lesson observations, work scrutiny and student questionnaires are all used effectively to ensure consistency across the department. All occur as part of the school's regular monitoring, evaluation and review processes. Department self-evaluation is robust, honest and evidence based. Leaders ensure that professional development opportunities are available for teachers in relation to both subject knowledge and pedagogical development. This has enabled new teachers to be compassionately nurtured. The religious education link governor has established good links with the religious education department and meets both formally and informally to monitor progress and discuss issues for development. Termly reports are provided to governors to confirm that they are well informed regarding progress within the department. Leaders and governors ensure that religious education receives the required time allocation in all year groups. Therefore, this complies with the requirements of the Bishops' Conference. The budget allocation for religious education is in line with other core subjects in the school.

## Collective worship

The quality and range of liturgy and prayer provided by the school.

### Collective worship key judgement grade

#### Pupil outcomes

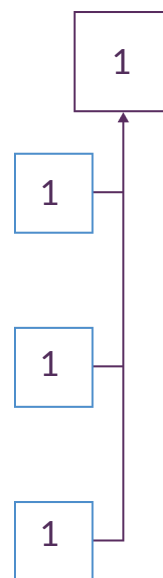
How well pupils participate in and respond to the school's collective worship

#### Provision

The quality of collective worship provided by the school

#### Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for collective worship



Prayer and liturgy is central to school life and has a powerful and very beneficial influence on it. The school community is brought together in prayer and links effectively with their work on Catholic social teaching. Students play a major role in the leadership of prayer and liturgy and relish this opportunity. They have a deep sense of identity and flourish in their varying roles. During the inspection a group of Year 11 students confidently and skilfully led assemblies for Year 8 and Year 9 on the 'Common Good' with just a single thought-provoking contribution from a member of staff. The youth chaplaincy team, with over a hundred members, are actively involved in planning and leading prayer and liturgy. During discussions with students, they articulated their involvement with enthusiasm and sincerity, their love for their school and the depth and understanding of their faith was clear. A significant number of students are active in their parishes and are well supported by the dynamic partnership between the school and the parishes. Prior to the start of GCSE examinations students are offered holy water and prayer is offered before examinations begin. This emphasises the centrality of Christ in all that they do and this is highly valued by students.

Most students articulate that they are aware of different forms of praying including traditional prayers, meditation and reflection. Every school week has a prayer theme related to the liturgical year and the strands of Catholic social teaching are explored cyclically. Each Monday every tutor group takes part in a liturgy based on the previous Sunday's gospel and this includes a meaningful student activity. Lessons and tutor times all begin with prayer, written by students, which is respectfully observed and sets a very positive tone for the lesson. However, these are occasionally undertaken in a superficial manner and lack prayerful

reverence. An extensive range of well-planned charitable activities provide support for Cafod, SVP, the Emmaus Trust, Brighter Futures and Swindon Homeless Shelter. Therefore, students have a secure knowledge and clear understanding of how to put faith into action. Students from other faiths and indeed no faith at all are supported and feel that they are welcomed and valued as members of the school community. The chapel is clearly a sacred space. It is an attractive and well-used space conducive to quiet reflection and prayer. There is also an upper room which is well used by Muslim students for prayer.

Providing meaningful prayer and liturgy activities is a high priority for leaders and governors. They plan the calendar carefully to ensure that all key celebrations in the church's year are observed including Mass, the sacraments and holy days of obligation. Leaders and staff inspire others through their modelling of good practice, both as leaders of and participants in prayer and liturgy. There is a culture of continuous improvement with helpful feedback to those leading prayer. Leaders and governors are committed to giving students experiences which strengthen their faith, most notably the retreat programme to St Cassian's Retreat Centre with whom the school has a longstanding relationship. The lay chaplain skilfully and creatively involves every student and member of staff in the prayer life of the school. She recognises and utilises everyone's gifts including art and drama. In addition to leading Masses, the local parish priest is a regular visitor to the school during break times. He is highly respected and loved by the students and will often speak with students who are experiencing challenging times in their lives. Chaplaincy is well funded and plans are in place to enhance the aesthetics of the chapel as part of the twentieth anniversary of the school.



## Information about the school

|                                          |                                                                        |
|------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Full name of school                      | St Joseph's Catholic College                                           |
| School unique reference number (URN)     | 136980                                                                 |
| School DfE Number (LAESTAB)              | 8665409                                                                |
| Full postal address of the school        | Ocotol Way, Swindon, SN3 3LR                                           |
| School phone number                      | 01793 714200                                                           |
| Headteacher or Head of School            | Jerry Giles                                                            |
| Chair of Governors                       | Miss Jessica Higgins                                                   |
| School Website                           | <a href="http://www.stjosephscollege.net">www.stjosephscollege.net</a> |
| Trusteeship                              | Diocesan                                                               |
| Phase                                    | Secondary                                                              |
| Type of school                           | Academy                                                                |
| Admissions policy                        | Non Selective                                                          |
| Age-range of pupils                      | 11 - 16                                                                |
| Gender of pupils                         | Mixed                                                                  |
| Date of last denominational inspection   | 06 December 2018                                                       |
| Previous denominational inspection grade | Good                                                                   |

## The Inspection Team

John Garry Maher Lead

Friedrich Mccarthy

John Shinkwin

David Purcell

## Key to grade judgements

| Grade | England              | Wales                                            |
|-------|----------------------|--------------------------------------------------|
| 1     | Outstanding          | Excellent                                        |
| 2     | Good                 | Good                                             |
| 3     | Requires improvement | Adequate and requires improvement                |
| 4     | Inadequate           | Unsatisfactory and in need of urgent improvement |