



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

Focused Compliance and Educational Quality Inspection Report

St. Joseph's College Reading

May 2022

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School's Details

College	St. Joseph's College			
DfE number	870/6002			
Registered charity number	277077			
Address	St. Joseph's College Upper Redlands Road Reading Berkshire RG1 5JT			
Telephone number	0118 966 1000			
Email address	mailbox@sjcr.org.uk			
Headteacher	Mrs Laura Stotesbury			
Chair of governors	Mr David Hallé			
Age range	3 to 18			
Number of pupils on roll	587			
	EYFS	19	Prep	148
	Seniors	322	Sixth Form	98
Inspection dates	10 to 13 May 2022			

1. Background Information

About the school

- 1.1 St. Joseph's College is an independent, Catholic, co-educational day school. It was founded in 1894 by the Order of St. Marie Madeleine Postel and moved from the original site in Bracknell to Reading in 1902 and to its current site in 1910. The school became fully co-educational in 2010.
- 1.2 The land and buildings are leased from the Order. The school is a registered charity governed by an educational trust, whose members comprise the governing body and are the trustees.
- 1.3 The head has been in post since September 2021 and since the previous inspection, the leadership team has been restructured and there has been continued investment in new facilities.
- 1.4 The inspection took into account the circumstances faced by schools during the COVID-19 pandemic and the restrictions imposed by government guidance at various points of the pandemic.

What the school seeks to do

- 1.5 The school's aim is to encourage, inspire, challenge and support pupils to fulfil their potential in a community founded on Catholic Christian values. Young people will be helped to develop their full potential academically, physically, emotionally and spiritually. The aim is for all pupils to go on to become creators of a more just and peaceful society in the future.

About the pupils

- 1.6 The pupils form a diverse community and represent a wide number of nations, cultures and economically diverse backgrounds. Data provided by the school indicate that the ability of pupils is at the top end of the average band compared to those taking the same test nationally. The school has identified 157 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), of whom nine receive additional support. The largest area of need is Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH). There is one pupil with an education, health and care (EHC) plan. The school identifies 79 pupils as more able and their needs are met by a programme of extension work.

2. Regulatory Compliance Inspection

Preface

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is approved by the Secretary of State to inspect schools which are, or whose heads are, in membership of the associations which form the Independent Schools Council (ISC) and report on the extent to which they meet the Independent School Standards ('the standards') in the Schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014. Inspections of schools with early years settings not requiring registration also report whether the school complies with key provisions of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory framework. Additionally, inspections report on the school's accessibility plan under Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 and the ban on corporal punishment under section 548 of the Education Act 1996. Inspections also comment on the progress made to meet any compliance action points set out in the school's most recent statutory inspection.

ISI inspections are also carried out under the arrangements of the ISC Associations for the maintenance and improvement of the quality of their membership.

This is a FOCUSED COMPLIANCE INSPECTION which was combined with an inspection of EDUCATIONAL QUALITY. The FOCUSED COMPLIANCE inspection reports only on the school's compliance with the standards. The standards represent minimum requirements and judgements are given either as **met** or as **not met**. All schools are required to meet all the standards applicable to them. Where the minimum requirements are not met, this is clearly indicated in the relevant section of the report and the school is required to take the actions specified. In this focused compliance inspection, key standards have been inspected in detail. These are the standards on safeguarding; measures to guard against bullying; arrangements for pupils' health and safety; arrangements to check the suitability of staff; the provision of information; the handling of parents' complaints; and other related aspects of leadership and management. The remaining standards and requirements are deemed to continue to be met unless evidence to the contrary has been found.

Inspections do not include matters that are outside of the regulatory framework described above, such as: an exhaustive health and safety audit; compliance with data protection requirements; an in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features; contractual arrangements with parents; an investigation of the financial viability of the school or its accounting procedures.

Inspectors may be aware of individual safeguarding concerns, allegations and complaints as part of the inspection process. Such matters will not usually be referred to specifically in published reports in this document but will have been considered by the team in reaching its judgements.

Links to the standards and requirements can be found here: [The Education \(Independent School Standards\) Regulations 2014](#), [Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework](#).

Key findings

- 2.1 The school meets the standards in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 and relevant requirements of the statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage, and associated requirements, and no further action is required as a result of this inspection.**

PART 1 – Quality of education provided

- 2.2 In the prep school, the school's own framework for assessment confirms that teaching enables pupils to make good progress in the context of Part 1 paragraph 3(a).
- 2.3 In the senior school, the school's GCSE and A-level results in the years 2019 to 2021 confirm that teaching enables pupils to make good progress in the context of Part 1 paragraph 3(a).
- 2.4 The curriculum is documented, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work for the pupils and covers the required breadth of material. The teaching enables pupils to make good progress, encompasses effective behaviour management and is supported by suitable resources. A suitable framework for the assessment of pupils' performance is in place.
- 2.5 Pupils receive relationships education in the junior school and relationships and sex education in the senior school, except in so far as they are lawfully excused. The school has consulted parents and published a written statement of its policy which has regard to the relevant statutory guidance.
- 2.6 The standards relating to the quality of education [paragraphs 1–4] are met.**

PART 2 – Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

- 2.7 Principles and values are actively promoted which facilitate the personal development of pupils as responsible, tolerant, law-abiding citizens.
- 2.8 The standard relating to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development [paragraph 5] is met.**

PART 3 – Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- 2.9 Arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils by means that pay due regard to current statutory guidance; good behaviour is promoted; bullying is prevented so far as reasonably practicable; health and safety requirements are met, including those relating to fire safety; provision is made for first aid. Pupils are properly supervised; admission and attendance registers are maintained, as required, and there is a strategic approach to risk assessment. A disability access plan is in place.
- 2.10 The standards relating to welfare, health and safety [paragraphs 6–16], the requirement of Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010, and the ban on corporal punishment under section 548 of the Education Act 1996 are met.**

PART 4 – Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors

- 2.11 The school makes appropriate checks to ensure the suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors, and a register is kept as required.
- 2.12 The standards relating to the suitability of those in contact with pupils at the school [paragraphs 17–21] are met.**

PART 5 – Premises of and accommodation at schools

2.13 Suitable toilet and changing facilities, and showering facilities where required by the standard, and appropriate accommodation for pupils' medical and therapy needs are provided. The premises are maintained to a standard commensurate with health and safety; acoustics and lighting are appropriate; water provision is adequate. Suitable outdoor space is provided for physical education and outdoor play.

2.14 The standards relating to the premises and accommodation [paragraphs 22–31] are met.

PART 6 – Provision of information

2.15 A range of information is published, provided or made available to parents, inspectors and the Department for Education. This includes details about the proprietor, the ethos of the school and the curriculum, and of the school's arrangements for admission, behaviour and exclusions, bullying, health and safety, first aid, details of the complaints procedure, and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year, and the provision for any with education, health and care plans or English as an additional language. It also includes particulars of the school's academic performance during the preceding school year, inspection reports and (for parents only) a report at least annually of their own child's progress. The safeguarding policy is posted on the school's website.

2.16 The standard relating to the provision of information [paragraph 32] is met.

PART 7 – Manner in which complaints are handled

2.17 Parental complaints, if any, are handled effectively through a three-stage process, (informal, formal and a hearing before a panel of three, one of whom is independent of the school). Each stage has clear time scales, and at the third stage the panel can make findings and recommendations which are communicated to the complainant. Records are kept appropriately, including of any action taken, whether or not a complaint is successful.

2.18 The standard relating to the handling of complaints [paragraph 33] is met.

PART 8 – Quality of leadership in and management of schools

2.19 The proprietor ensures that the leadership and management demonstrate good skills and knowledge, and fulfil their responsibilities effectively, so that the other standards are consistently met, and they actively promote the well-being of the pupils.

2.20 The standard relating to leadership and management of the school [paragraph 34] is met.

3. Educational Quality Inspection

Preface

The **EDUCATIONAL QUALITY** inspection reports on the quality of the school's work. It focuses on the two key outcomes:

- The achievement of the pupils, including their academic development, and
- The personal development of the pupils.

The headline judgements apply one of the ISI descriptors 'excellent', 'good', 'sound' or 'unsatisfactory'.

Where necessary, National Curriculum nomenclature is used to refer to year groups in the school.

Key findings

3.1 The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is good.

- Pupils have a strong focus in lessons and work positively both as independent and collaborative learners.
- Pupils across the school, show good communication skills in discussion with excellent use of appropriate terminology.
- Pupils display a good knowledge in all their subjects and apply this to new learning situations effectively, especially when they are fully challenged in their thinking.
- Pupils make strong progress and achieve results in examinations that exceed the expectations of their predictions, though not always reaching their full potential.

3.2 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.

- Pupils are confident and resilient individuals and have an excellent understanding of what is needed for the next stage of their lives.
- Pupils display an excellent level of responsibility for their own behaviour and appreciate the needs of others.
- Pupils have a very positive attitude towards supporting other people both within the school and the wider community.
- Pupils embrace positively the diversity of their school and respect and value their differences.

Recommendations

3.3 The school should make the following improvements:

- Ensure that pupils are able to make the most of their potential, through effective assessment which consistently supports their progress across the school.
- Challenge fully the way pupils think creatively, in order to develop further their knowledge and understanding.

The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements

3.4 The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is good.

3.5 Pupils achieve strong results in external examinations, exceeding the predictions from standardised assessments at every level. In the Prep school, pupils make good progress over the years and their

results in standardised tests indicate that a significant percentage gain results above the national average. At A level in 2019, just under two-thirds of grades were at A* to B. At GCSE that year, about a half of grades were at A*/A or equivalent. Pupils' results are higher than national averages at both GCSE and A level. Pupils with SEND also achieve above expectations and are fully in line with the main cohort, reflecting the strong support they receive with their learning. The results from centre-assessed and teacher-assessed grading in 2020 and 2021 indicate that these equate to previous performance. Many pupils in the sixth form undertake the Extended Project Qualification (EPQ) with two-thirds of grades achieved at A* to A in 2021. Most leavers applying to university succeed in gaining places to their first choice destinations. The achievements of the pupils reflect the commitment of the teaching and the clear direction set by the school's leaders and this is something almost all parents commented on very favourably, in the questionnaires.

- 3.6 Pupils display a good level of knowledge across all areas of learning and they are able to make effective use of this, when facing new tasks in their learning. At times, this level of understanding can be excellent, when their creative skills are fully challenged. Pupils in the Prep of all ages and abilities make good progress over time to develop their knowledge, skill and understanding. The progress is particularly strong in the children's application of writing skills from the EYFS through to Key Stage One. Pupils' achievements were seen both in their engagement in lessons and in their written work. Pupils in a Year 8 history lesson on life in the trenches, showed a clear grasp of what the challenges might be and were using their knowledge perceptively. Pupils in a sixth form English lesson displayed a high level of textual knowledge in the way they compared a Shakespearean sonnet to previous texts they had studied. Pupils receive guidance on their progress through marked work, grade cards and reports. At its best, this feedback enables them to develop a strong understanding of their own strengths and weaknesses and to use this to support their learning. However, the marking of work is not always consistent in the way it advises and then pupils are less sure of what to do next and consequently do not always make the most of their potential. This point was commented on by a small minority of pupils in the questionnaires.
- 3.7 Pupils are excellent communicators in terms of their oracy in the classroom, where they frequently express their ideas. Pupils demonstrate that they are highly articulate and speak with real confidence. This is promoted through supportive teaching which encourages pupils to ask and answer questions spontaneously and engage in thoughtful discussion. This was observed with a child in the EYFS setting, who explained the process of metamorphosis using an array of technical and descriptive language. In discussions with inspectors, pupils framed their arguments expertly to express their opinions. Pupils develop vocabulary of a high level from a very young age. Pupils in the senior school are always keen to engage in the activities that their teachers set. When opportunities are presented in written work, as seen in some religious studies essays from sixth formers, pupils are able to demonstrate excellent skills in extended writing. This strength was also seen in the excellent work produced for the EPQ, where pupils chose subjects of particular interest to them, such as how taking a photograph in colour or monochrome affected the impact of the subject or how the ever-ageing population will impact on our ability to provide social care.
- 3.8 Pupils are highly focused in class and show an excellent attitude towards their learning. They take responsibility for their learning and are equally effective working independently or together in groups. Pupils' achievement is most successful when teaching sets open-ended tasks which put the onus on the pupils but this does not always happen. Prep pupils organise their work neatly and methodically with a high level of presentation. Pupils in Year 4, worked collaboratively and enthusiastically on identifying two-dimensional shapes whilst out and about within the school grounds. A geography group in the sixth form were discussing how they would carry out their individual fieldwork study, seeing it as clearly their responsibility to decide this. Pupils are able to work successfully both collaboratively and independently, helped by the effective planning of lessons and selection of resources and activities.

- 3.9 Pupils show good numeracy skills in their mathematics lessons and can apply a wide range of these skills to other subject areas, such as science, geography and business studies. Prep school pupils appear naturally eager to participate in mathematics lessons and this was highlighted by a starter activity in Year 6 where the pupils recognised quickly and accurately, the rule for a sequence involving whole numbers, fractions and decimals. More able pupils applied the rule to add the next three terms. Pupils in a Year 10 science lesson applied good numerical skills using the graphical treatment of data effectively.
- 3.10 Pupils are generally very competent in their use of information and communication technology (ICT), helped undoubtedly by their experience with the valuable online learning provided by the school during the pandemic, as commented on by parents, in the questionnaire responses. Pupils make good use of technology for research and word-processing and in specific elements of the curriculum such as data-logging, though more creative use was not seen. Pupils in the younger years show high levels of motivation for their weekly ICT lessons and produce good results, showing their confidence and understanding.
- 3.11 Pupils have good study skills and can make effective progress in their learning, helped by some specific lessons in the curriculum on how to learn. In the lessons observed and in the work scrutiny, pupils did not always make the most of their potential with their thinking, as some teaching does not provide enough opportunity for extended thinking and this can limit their development. In some lessons, pupils were challenged with interesting tasks and were moving forward in their learning quickly. Pupils with SEND learn effectively with the valuable support of teaching and in the questionnaires, most parents echoed this point. Pupils in the Prep, demonstrate a sound level of study and research skills, for example, note taking, mind maps, concept maps, use of rhyming dictionaries and other memorisation techniques. Pupils in Year 9 analysed the various factors behind climate change, the possible solutions and the action that should be taken on a global level and developed some strong hypotheses, using a number of sources to reach their conclusion. This high level of skill was also seen in a Year 13 history lesson where pupils shared their different revision methods in a mature and reflective manner with some interesting ideas coming through.
- 3.12 Pupils achieve success in a wide range of activities both within and beyond the classroom and they gain valuable new skills from their involvement. Parents in the questionnaires commented on the wide range of the school's extra-curricular programme. Individuals and teams gain recognition at regional and national level in a variety of sports, including athletics and netball. Pupils enjoy success in national music and drama examinations including the highest levels, as well as performing in concerts and productions of a high quality. A notable example was seen in a recording of a recent concert, in which pupils joined with the London Mozart Players, providing the soloist in a Mozart piano concerto and the choir singing Vivaldi's *Gloria*. Pupils in Year 6 commented how they were aware of how the skills gained through drama lessons assisted them personally and socially. Pupils actively engage in the DofE programme and achieve bronze and gold awards, developing a range of social skills in the process. Pupils are very successful and achieve awards from their participation in the popular science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) activities as well as in national competitions such as the UK Maths Challenge and Physics Olympiad.

The quality of the pupils' personal development

- 3.13 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 3.14 Pupils are highly confident and resilient individuals but without any sense of brashness or arrogance. They want to learn and make the most of themselves, looking ahead positively to what they can achieve. Prep school pupils are proud of their community and work hard to fulfil and embrace the school's aims of developing their full potential as individuals. Pupils in Year 8 showed excellent confidence in developing high jump skills during a physical education lesson and a Year 7 English group related with real perception, their study of *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* to their own feelings about

families. Pupils have a high level of self-understanding. They constantly discuss ideas and reflect on themselves during the opportunities given in personal, social and health education (PSHE), chapel services and assemblies. In a tutor-time session during Mental Health Week, pupils spoke thoughtfully about the people with whom they had connections and who would support them if they needed help. In the questionnaires, pupils were very appreciative about the help they receive from the school.

- 3.15 There is a strong sense of orderliness in the pupils' calm demeanour all through the school. They have an excellent sense of right and wrong and often seek to challenge each other's behaviour if they think it is inappropriate. They accept that they are responsible for themselves and aware of the impact they might have on others. Pupils are very self-regulating as individuals and this creates a positive and mature environment in which everyone can work and achieve their potential. They accept responsibility for their own actions and recognise when they have got things wrong. They also are confident in reminding others of their expectations if this is necessary. The school promotes this attitude, through the curriculum and the general atmosphere established by school leaders and teachers, all part of the Christian ethos. On the rare occasions when any misbehaviour or unkindness is detected, appropriate action based on reflection is used and support given to all involved. Pupils interact positively with each other in the corridors and communal spaces. They think in a mature way and are respectful of each other's opinions. In a sixth form lesson in English, pupils related their own sense of a moral code to their study of the characters and their level of morality, in the play *Othello*.
- 3.16 Pupils are fully engaged in supporting each other within school, at all levels. Pupils are keen to take on positions of responsibility and leadership and take these positions very seriously. They quite clearly wish to support the school in its desire to create a strong community based on Christian values and are selfless in their motivation for embarking on these roles and are proud to be of use. The school is active in its support and encouragement for pupils to take on this responsibility. Pupils from Year 6 help with the younger ones in EYFS and Reception. Senior pupils were observed in the Prep school, helping with reading and mathematics, as well as acting as mentors to younger pupils in the senior school. They also look beyond their own community into the wider one and raise considerable sums of money for local and international charities, seeking to support those less fortunate than themselves. They do this through events such as a collection for the harvest festival and a silver coin trail.
- 3.17 Pupils embrace the diversity of the school community and seek to celebrate it through making each other aware of their different cultures. In the questionnaires, pupils comment positively on the inclusive nature of the school. They often present assemblies to acknowledge festivals from all religions. Pupils have a strong understanding of the importance of tolerance and respect for all. Their interactions in school with staff and other pupils are courteous and based on mutual respect on all sides. The senior prefects' decision last year to establish a diversity committee and the way this has flourished reflects the strong understanding that pupils have of the importance of actively promoting respect and tolerance for the multi-cultural world in which they live. Prep school pupils stated in interview how they listened to the ideas of their peers and took these to the diversity committee for discussion. Others commented how they were all friends in the school.
- 3.18 Pupils show a genuine respect for the strong spiritual atmosphere in the school and see the value of stepping back and thinking about their lives. In interviews pupils stated that they enjoy their study of a range of religions. The Prep school May Procession was a spiritual occasion which was embraced fully from those in the EYFS to Year 6, as well as extended members of the community. Pupils engage fully in supporting a strong awareness of the environment and have taken responsibility for promoting green issues through ecology clubs. Many have a strong aesthetic appreciation of the world around them and this was encountered on inspection, in the Prep chamber choir's beautifully simple and effective rendition of *The Lord bless you and keep you* and in the Lower Senior chamber choir's rehearsing of the *Kyrie*.
- 3.19 Pupils have a strong understanding of the important role they have in driving their own futures and embrace the challenge. Pupils are used to making choices in their learning, through the tasks set by

teaching and this helps to develop the skills of decision-making. Pupils are clearly comfortable and confident in this process of choosing subject options at school and university, and thrive on the school's encouragement. They consider options carefully and make decisions in a mature and considered way. The supportive environment of the school means that the pupils are not afraid to make a mistake as they know that they will learn from this and will receive support to do so. Prep school pupils talk positively about how the support they receive from the school, helps them to make good decisions.

- 3.20 Pupils display excellent collaborative skills, requiring effective teamwork. This can be seen in the success of the school's musical ensembles and in the dramatic productions, as well as in the popular DofE award scheme, sports teams and clubs. There are numerous opportunities for younger pupils to work with older ones and learn from them, such as in the dining hall, where pupils in Year 6 help younger ones with the salad bar. There is an ethos of respect, support, kindness, and openness across the entire community which serves to strengthen the confidence and resilience of everyone. Pupils value their relationships with individuals and groups. They are enthusiastic about helping to make a positive contribution to the school and local community. This sense of togetherness is seen in lessons and all around the school where pupils are observed working or mixing together in small groups, engaging in projects such as their support of the Christmas Box appeal.
- 3.21 Pupils have a clear understanding of how to keep safe online, supported by robust monitoring systems in school and this is well-established within the school community. In interviews, pupils displayed an excellent appreciation of the importance of a balanced diet for maintaining good health. They also take advantage of the varied opportunities for sporting activities to improve their all-round health. Pupils are also very conscious of the importance of looking after their emotional health and express their appreciation for the support provided by the school. Pupils from the Prep said in interview how they saw the chapel as a safe place to go when they wanted time to themselves. Senior pupils have been closely involved with the recent growth of the sixth form sporting programme because they wanted to have more physical activity. They spoke very positively about the school helping them through nutrition talks and the availability of quiet areas and time for reflection. The garden that pupils have helped create was a place which promoted quiet engagement with nature and took them out of the pressures of work. The pupils' mature understanding of this important aspect of their lives is entirely in keeping with a key aim of the school in developing the pupils' physical and emotional potential.

4. Inspection Evidence

- 4.1 The inspectors observed lessons, had discussions with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with members of staff and with a group of governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended form meetings and assemblies. Inspectors visited the facilities for the youngest pupils, together with the learning support and educational resource areas. Inspectors considered the responses of parents, staff and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires. The inspectors examined curriculum and other documentation made available by the school.

Inspectors

Gareth Price	Reporting inspector
Ruth Weeks	Accompanying inspector
Jonathan Ricketts	Compliance team inspector (Deputy head, HMC school)
Shirley Drummond	Team inspector (Head, IAPS school)
Grant Whitaker	Team inspector (Former director of studies, IAPS school)