

St Joseph's Catholic School

Address: Church Road, Laverstock, Salisbury, Wiltshire, SP1 1QY

Unique reference number (URN): 126473

Inspection report: 7 July 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 ●

Personal development and wellbeing

Strong standard ●

Leaders have thoughtfully designed the personal development programme. The curriculum is shaped by the local context. Pupils gain a broad and detailed understanding of consent, fundamental British values and healthy living. Across the school, pupils understand what is expected of their conduct. They behave with integrity. Their good-natured conduct during social times and in lessons contributes to the school's vibrant, cheerful atmosphere.

Pupils are enthusiastic members of their school houses, which provide healthy competition and enable pupils of all ages to feel a part of one community. Pupils are elected to leadership positions each year following a comprehensive process. Pupil voice leads to meaningful change within the school. Pupils speak excitedly about the 'happiest minute of the week', a weekly celebration of kindness and pride compiled by prefects.

Pupils reflect on their beliefs and experiences. They are encouraged to consider different viewpoints and hear from a range of external speakers, such as a North Korean defector who recently visited the school. Pupils take part in charitable work and community activities. Consideration and respect for others extend far beyond the school gates. The school encourages pupils to care for those less fortunate. For example, pupils make regular foodbank contributions, and the school hosted an outdoor sleep-out to fundraise for a homelessness charity. This helps pupils to understand the importance of teamwork and their role within the wider community.

Enrichment is integrated into pupils' timetables. This ensures that all pupils participate in wider opportunities. This does not detract from the wealth of clubs available to pupils, including boccia, curling, history and origami. Teachers encourage participation in clubs aligned with pupils' interests and ambitions. Financial barriers to participation in the school's extensive offer are effectively reduced.

Pupils benefit from a carefully structured careers programme. Through 'mock interview day' in Year 10 and workshops in key stage 3, pupils learn about a broad range of future options. They also carry out work experience in Year 10. This helps them to gain meaningful insights into the world of work.

Expected standard ●

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard ●

Pupils understand the importance of coming to school every day. Pupils' attendance is in line with the national average. The attendance of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above the national average. Leaders' actions, such as adjusting the school day timings, support pupils to arrive on time and attend regularly. The school works closely with pupils and their families to support improved attendance habits. Bespoke timetables are used with care and are appropriate for the pupils involved. The school uses

alternative provision for a small group of pupils. It works with providers to closely monitor pupils' progress and attendance.

Pupils value their learning and appreciate the guidance they receive from their teachers. Lessons are rarely disrupted and pupils follow instructions promptly. Around the school, pupils are respectful and follow the school rules. Staff apply the rules fairly and suspensions are used appropriately. Pupils are safe at school. They know that bullying and discrimination are not tolerated here. Leaders respond to serious incidents quickly and effectively. Pupils are encouraged to learn about and reflect on their behaviour and its impact on others. They demonstrate respect in their interactions with each other. Many greet staff and visitors with commendable politeness and maturity.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

Leaders have built an inclusive community where pupils feel a deep sense of belonging. Pupils know there is a network of care around them and appreciate the high-quality pastoral support they receive. Leaders work well with families to prioritise pupils' best interests. The school's ambition for all pupils to be equally included in all aspects of school life is championed by all staff.

Leaders work diligently to identify the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Relevant information is shared with staff so that they can support pupils in class. There is a clear approach to understanding barriers to learning. Staff receive training on appropriate strategies to support pupils. However, there is variability in how teachers implement strategies to help pupils fully access their learning. Some pupils receive additional interventions and support from other professionals. Leaders collaborate effectively with these external agencies. The swift provision of support has a clear impact on these young people. Leaders consider the use of alternative provision carefully and ensure it meets pupils' needs.

All pupils have the opportunity to contribute to the life of the school and community. Leaders use the pupil premium strategy effectively to support disadvantaged pupils. For example, the school provides financial support to ensure enrichment opportunities are accessible. Disadvantaged pupils generally achieve well.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

There have been significant staffing changes within the school, particularly at the leadership level. Leaders are supported by governors who have a wealth of experience and expertise. They are proactively involved in school life. Governors hold leaders to account. They ask perceptive questions and challenge areas of weakness. This helps to bring about positive changes.

There is a clear and common understanding across all levels of leadership of the school's strengths and areas for development. Staff are aligned in their vision to drive the school improvement journey forward. Leaders celebrate the improvements they have made at the school in recent years and have outlined clear priorities. Some of these initiatives are being adopted and embedded by curriculum areas at different rates. Leaders are taking action. They know there is still more to be done before this meets their desired standard.

Staff are proud to work at the school. They feel respected and well supported to manage their workload. Governors and school leaders are mindful of staff wellbeing when they introduce change. They use a well-informed professional development programme to build staff expertise. They also support early career teachers effectively.

Across the school, a shared sense of togetherness and clear priorities help build a strong sense of community. This is underpinned by the school's ethos. The school is held in increasingly high regard among parents and in the local community. Parents are largely positive about the school. Furthermore, leaders act in pupils' best interests. They carefully consider how best to support the most vulnerable pupils in their care.

Needs attention ●

Achievement

Needs attention ●

The attainment of most pupils in national examinations remains below that of their peers nationally. Disadvantaged pupils perform in line with the national average for similar pupils. End of key stage 4 examination results have been below average for some time in certain areas of the curriculum. Leaders have appropriate plans in place to address this, and results in some areas have shown an improvement. However, it is too early to see the full impact of this work.

Pupils benefit from targeted support that effectively closes gaps in their literacy skills and knowledge. However, there are gaps in pupils' foundational knowledge of handwriting and mathematics. This contributes to an inconsistency in the quality of work that pupils produce.

Leaders' actions to strengthen the curriculum have led to improvements in the quality of pupils' work in some curriculum areas. However, this work is not fully embedded and does not provide a consistent picture of secure improvement across the whole curriculum. Not all staff have consistently high expectations for the quality of pupils' written work across subjects.

Curriculum and teaching

Needs attention ●

Leaders are aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the curriculum. There are some inconsistencies in how well the curriculum is delivered. Leaders have recently introduced routines to help pupils retrieve and build their knowledge. However, some teachers do not apply the school's agreed approaches reliably, which weakens how well pupils learn the curriculum. For example, teaching activities that allow pupils to recall prior learning are not implemented consistently or effectively in some lessons. Teachers do not always accurately check what pupils know and can do. As a result, gaps in pupils' knowledge are not addressed quickly enough. Leaders are aware of this, but the impact of their improvement work is not yet embedded across the whole curriculum.

The curriculum is well sequenced and builds on prior learning. Teachers have the appropriate subject knowledge to deliver the curriculum. Leaders have refined the curriculum, although they acknowledge there is more to do. Some teachers do not always

use the strategies intended to help pupils who struggle with learning. As a result, these pupils do not learn as securely as they should.

Leaders have correctly identified pupils with gaps in their reading. Well-designed reading interventions are having a positive impact. However, plans to support pupils with gaps in mathematics and handwriting are still in their early stages.

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

Pupils are safe and happy at St Joseph's Catholic School. The school has a calm and purposeful atmosphere that has improved over time. Pupils treat others with care and respect, creating a positive environment for learning. The school's Catholic ethos underpins the sense of community and belonging that pupils feel. Pupils value the warm and welcoming atmosphere that permeates the school, which they describe as a family. Pupils' manners and behaviour are impressive. Pupils appreciate the positive and respectful relationships they share with staff. They feel confident to approach staff if they need help.

Sanctions are consistently applied by staff, ensuring that all pupils are clear about the expectations. Pupils are confident that leaders deal swiftly with any instances of bullying or discriminatory language. Pupils attend school regularly, especially those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. This is due to leaders' rigorous work with pupils and their families to reduce barriers to attendance.

Pupils experience an inconsistent quality of teaching. In lessons, pupils listen to teachers' instructions well. However, the quality of some pupils' work does not always meet leaders' high expectations. Adaptations in teaching to meet pupils' needs are not always effective. As a result, some pupils have gaps in their knowledge, which are reflected in their achievement in national examinations.

Pupils' mature attitudes are developed through the trust that staff place in them. Pupils take part in wider school life and value the enrichment offer built into the school curriculum. They enjoy attending a wealth of clubs and taking part in a wide range of sports. Some pupils relish opportunities where they expand their experiences through educational visits. Pupils enjoy taking part in leadership roles. These activities help them to build their confidence and self-esteem. They support pupils to develop skills that prepare them for life beyond school.

Next steps

- Leaders should improve the consistency and quality of adaptation so that gaps in pupils' knowledge are accurately identified and addressed, enabling pupils to learn equally well across the curriculum.
- Leaders should embed their curriculum and teaching expectations consistently across the school, so that pupils achieve improved outcomes.

- Leaders should ensure that all pupils secure the foundational knowledge in mathematics and handwriting.
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About this inspection

The chair of the board of governors in this school is Graham Maher.

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 senior and middle leaders. Inspectors also spoke with teaching staff, support staff and governors. The lead inspector also spoke with a representative from the local authority and a representative from the diocese.

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.

This school is registered as having a Roman Catholic religious character. It is in the Diocese of Clifton. Its last section 48 inspection took place in June 2023.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school currently makes use of 10 alternative provisions, including 8 that are unregistered.

Headteacher: Matthew Higgins

Lead inspector:

Frances Bywater, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Deirdre Fitzpatrick, Ofsted Inspector

Benjamin Antell, Ofsted Inspector

Steve Smith, Ofsted Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

This was the data available at the time of the full inspection, taken from [different sources](#). More recent data may have been published since the full inspection took place.



The inspector(s) used this data during the full inspection on 7 July 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

597

Well below 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

625

Well 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)

25.13%

Close to average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals at any point in the last 6 years.

National average: 28.9%

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

4.52%

Above 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

22.61%

Well above average

What does this mean?

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

National average: 13.4%

Location deprivation

Well below 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)	39.3%	45.4%	Close to average

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	37.9%	45.9%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	42.0%	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)	40.4	46.1	Below
2023/24 (final)	39.9	45.9	Below
2022/23 (final)	40.6	46.3	Below

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)	-0.64	-0.03	Below
2022/23 (final)	-0.27	-0.03	Close to average

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)	15.4%	25.8%	Below
2023/24 (final)	15.8%	25.8%	Below
2022/23 (final)	13.6%	25.2%	Below

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)	31.9	34.9	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	29.3	34.6	Below
2022/23 (final)	27.0	35.0	Below

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)	-1.10	-0.57	Below
2022/23 (final)	-1.07	-0.57	Below

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)	15.4%	53.1%	-37.8 pp
2023/24 (final)	15.8%	53.1%	-37.3 pp
2022/23 (final)	13.6%	52.4%	-38.8 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)	31.9	50.4	-18.5
2023/24 (final)	29.3	50.0	-20.7
2022/23 (final)	27.0	50.3	-23.3

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)	-1.10	0.16	-1.26
2022/23 (final)	-1.07	0.17	-1.24

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)	93%	92%	Average
2022 leavers (revised)	91%	93%	Average
2021 leavers (revised)	93%	94%	Average

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)	7.3%	8.4%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	7.5%	8.9%	Below
2022/23 (3 term)	7.3%	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)	19.0%	23.4%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	20.0%	25.6%	Below
2022/23 (3 term)	17.9%	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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