

Inspection of St Joseph's College

London Road, Trent Vale, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire ST4 5NT

Inspection dates: 29 and 30 April 2025

The quality of education **Outstanding**

Behaviour and attitudes **Outstanding**

Personal development **Outstanding**

Leadership and management **Outstanding**

Sixth-form provision **Outstanding**

Previous inspection grade Outstanding

What is it like to attend this school?

St Joseph's College is a special place. The motto of 'head, hand, heart' permeates the school and reflects its deep and lasting commitment to nurturing pupils and students to be the very best version of themselves. Pupils, including those in the sixth form, are exceptional ambassadors for their school. They feel safe, loved and nurtured. They are confident, respectful and kind. They thrive, both academically and socially, in this exceptional school.

The curriculum is unashamedly ambitious for all pupils. It enables pupils to achieve very highly and also helps them to grow spiritually and morally. As a result, pupils are exceptionally well prepared for their next steps.

The school has extremely high expectations of pupils' behaviour and conduct. Pupils rise to the challenge of these aspirations and actively uphold the school's ethos and values. Behaviour in the school is exemplary. There is a strong culture of acceptance and inclusion at the school. Pupils, including those in the sixth form, benefit from an exceptional range of extra-curricular activities that far extend beyond the academic. For example, pupils take part in retreats abroad, have access to high-quality external speakers and attend a wide range of clubs and trips.

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

The curriculum has been meticulously crafted and sequenced to ensure that all pupils, including those in the sixth form, develop important knowledge over time. This ensures that pupils build effectively on a depth of prior knowledge and understanding. The vast majority of pupils study the English Baccalaureate suite of subjects, underlining the school's commitment to its ambitious curriculum. All pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), achieve exceptionally well.

In every subject area, deep thought has been given by the school about the important knowledge that it wants pupils to learn. Key concepts are carefully ordered and revisited. Teachers check pupils' understanding purposefully. They skilfully identify and address any misconceptions or gaps in pupils' learning. This allows pupils to make exceptional and long-lasting links within and across subjects.

Reading is prioritised across the school. The school encourages many opportunities for reading for meaning, as well as for pleasure. The school has also thought carefully about prioritising reading for those who may find it challenging, such as investing in a wide range of dyslexic-friendly books. Pupils who are at the early stage of reading, or who have gaps in their reading knowledge, receive high-quality and impactful intervention.

The school has extremely high expectations of pupils with SEND. They access the same ambitious curriculum as their peers. Through highly effective transition arrangements and regular training, staff quickly identify and address the needs of pupils with SEND. Teachers are adept at personalising learning to meet pupils' needs. This ensures that

pupils with SEND are highly motivated, engage enthusiastically and achieve highly in their learning.

The school values pupils' personal development very highly. It offers pupils a vast array of opportunities to develop their talents and interests. Pupils benefit from a well-planned personal, social and health education programme. They are encouraged to prioritise their mental and physical health. The school also teaches pupils how to maintain healthy relationships and stay safe online and in the community.

Careers education is exceptional. Pupils learn about different types of careers, and the qualifications and skills each one requires. This is also skilfully linked to pupils' lessons, so that their interests can be harnessed and developed quickly.

In the sixth form, students benefit from a high-quality and inclusive curriculum in a broad range of subjects. Lessons are challenging and are carefully designed to build knowledge and skills over time. As a result, students are exceptionally well prepared for their next stage in education, employment or training. The vast majority of pupils go on to university and all are able to access their desired next step. The personal development curriculum offered to students in the sixth form is exemplary. The school actively encourage sixth-form students to be of service to others in the community, mentoring younger pupils or supporting with projects for those people less fortunate than themselves.

Governance is a real strength. Governors have an accurate view of the school. The governing body has an impressive range of skills and qualities and uses these very well to support the school in key areas. Governors think carefully about how to support staff workload and well-being. As a result, staff are proud to be part of the St Joseph's community. They feel nurtured, developed and well supported.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and](#)

[protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	136460
Local authority	Stoke-on-Trent
Inspection number	10334524
Type of school	Selective
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	1,133
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	388
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Ross Selby
Headteacher	Charlotte Slattery
Website	www.stjosephstrentvale.com
Dates of previous inspection	4 and 5 February 2014

Information about this school

- The school uses one registered alternative provision.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in years 7 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.
- Since the previous inspection, a new headteacher has been appointed. However, she is not new to the school.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form

provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024 will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The lead inspector met with representatives of the governing body. He also spoke to the Director of the English Schools Office.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in science, mathematics, geography, history and music. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. An inspector also spoke with other subject leaders about the curriculum in other subjects.
- Inspectors considered the views expressed by parents in their responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. Inspectors also spoke to one parent on the telephone during the inspection.
- Inspectors spoke to a range of staff to discuss the support that they receive from leaders.
- Inspectors spoke with some pupils about school life. Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour and spoke to pupils at social times.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.

Inspection team

Neil Warner, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Trudi Young	Ofsted Inspector
Ant Edkins	Ofsted Inspector
Sara Arkle	Ofsted Inspector
Guy Shears	Ofsted Inspector

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