

Overview

**College Lycée privé
Saint-Joseph**

18 Rue du Bienheureux Pierre Favre, 74230 THÔNES, France
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Head of School Mr. Pascal Vaast

Founded 1933

Type Private collège-lycée (secondary school) recognized by the French state

Location Thones, Haute-Savoie – nestled between Annecy and the Aravis ski stations

Students ≈900 pupils across middle and high school

Levels Collège (6th-9th grade) and general Lycée (10th -12th grade)

Languages offered French, English, German, Spanish and Italian

Motto “À chacun son excellence” – to each student their own excellence

Mission To welcome every young person and help them discover and develop their talents through personalized educational and cultural programs

Collège-Lycée Saint Joseph sits in the mountain town of Thones, about 20 km from the lakeside city of Annecy. Its Alpine setting offers access to the ski resorts of La Clusaz, Le Grand-Bornand and Manigod, creating an environment where academics, arts and mountain sports naturally coexist. Founded in 1933, the school is a private Catholic secondary institution under contract with the French Ministry of Education which requires compliance with official curricula and schedules. Students attend from sixième (6th grade) through terminale (12th grade), and the school now educates roughly 900 students in co-educational middle- and high-school programs.

Academics and the French Baccalaureate (BAC)

In France, the BAC is the national secondary school examination, typically taken at the end of 12th grade. It is a rigorous academic qualification recognized internationally.

Saint Joseph offers a **general academic curriculum** with tracks in sciences, humanities and economics leading to the **French baccalaureate**. Courses adhere to national programs while leaving room for innovation; Tuesday and Thursday afternoons are dedicated to modular classes for tutoring, arts, sports and cultural activities. From 6th grade onward all students study **English** (LV1). Second foreign languages (LV2) – **German, Spanish or Italian** – begin in 7th grade.

Grading System

Grades are awarded on a scale from 0 to 20, with 20 being the highest possible score. A minimum score of 10/20 is required to pass each subject. Scores above 16/20 are considered excellent and are relatively rare. Majors and core subjects are weighed more than others.

French Baccalaureat Grading Scale*						
US	A+	A	B	C	D	F
French BAC equivalent	16-20	14-15.9	12-13.9	10-11.9	8-9.9	0-7.9

* There are no official equivalencies between French and American diplomas. Grading scale translation used as per "Studies Office of the French Embassy in Washington"

https://boston.consulfrance.org/IMG/pdf/Equivalences_diplomes_francais_aux_USA.pdf?3131/5c27b22ccaa12d400efbab6bd96fcef124c16151

Unlike some educational systems that offer honors or prizes, the French school system uses a system of "mentions" to acknowledge student performance. The highest distinction, "félicitations," is awarded each trimester to roughly 5% of students who demonstrate exceptional academic results.

Academic Structure

The school year runs from start of September to start of July, with 3 school terms.

Students follow a broad curriculum with 8 core subjects. In 11th grade (Première), students choose three specialization tracks (majors) from options such as:

- Mathematics
- Physics-Chemistry
- English Language & Literature
- Earth & Life Sciences
- Economics & Social Sciences
- Physical Education Practices & Sports Culture
- Art & Cinema

In 12th grade (Terminale), students continue with two of these majors.

Enrollment

Number of students per level in the Lycee

Seconde	(10 th grade)	120
Premiere	(11 th grade)	105
Terminale	(12 th grade)	105

Admission

Eligibility for admission is assessed through the student's school record (dossier scolaire) and confirmation of having passed the Brevet des colleges exam.

Assessment and Evaluation

The school year includes three formal evaluation sessions known as Conseils de Classe, which contribute to the term averages. The final Baccalauréat grade is composed of:

60% final exams, mostly held in June of 12th grade

40% continuous assessment, based on coursework and term grades

A key component, the French Literature exam, is taken at the end of 11th grade.

Achievements

Saint Joseph consistently achieves excellent examination results. In 2025 the school recorded **100 % success at the Baccalauréat** and over **85 % of these graduates** received mentions. The High school (Lycée) is ranked among the top 10% schools in France in all ratings over the last 5 years.

These outcomes underscore the school's commitment to excellence and the effectiveness of its personalized approach. Equipped with modern facilities including science laboratories, technology rooms, a theatre stage, art studios, an audiovisual production suite, gymnasiums and a climbing wall, Saint Joseph offers students a rich environment where academic rigor coexists with artistic creativity and athletic achievement. Its emphasis on multilingualism, global awareness and community life produces graduates who are adaptable, culturally open and well prepared for studies in France or abroad.

Grade distribution in %

Year end grades for full year courses for academic year 2024-2025 for 12th grade.

Grades Subject [in %]	16-20 A+	14-15.9 A	12-13.9 B	10-11.9 C	8-9.9 D	0-7.9 F
French (literature)	8	23	32	37		
English (LV1)	28	32	35	5		
Spanish (LV2)	33	42	25			
History-Geography	21	29	31	12	7	
Physical Education	37	42	19	2		
Mathematics specialty	14	25	32	22	7	
Physics & chemistry specialty	12	28	32	28		
Life Science specialty	12	32	36	20		

Notable offerings

Complementary and Expert Mathematics

Saint Joseph offers two options for students that wish to pursue mathematics beyond the required curriculum; complementary math for non-mathematical majors and expert math for those who already have math as a major and want in-depth preparation for further scientific studies. Both options represent 3h per week.

Sports sections

Saint Joseph's location between alpine resorts allows it to host several competitive sports sections. Admission to these sections is selective, based on both **academic performance** and **technical evaluations**.

SECTION	KEY FEATURES
ALPINE SKIING	Prepares students for the French State Ski Instructor certification and includes year-round physical training and ski sessions with certified instructors. Winter training takes place in La Clusaz, Grand-Bornand, and Manigod. All students actively participate in local and national ski competitions.
CROSS-COUNTRY	Focuses on competitive cross-country skiing and prepares students for regional/national races and the State Instructor exam.
CLIMBING	Aims to make pupils autonomous on artificial walls and natural cliffs, preparing for the DEJEPS certification. Training uses the school's climbing wall, a municipal gym and natural cliffs; there are several training camps during the year
TENNIS	Designed for competitive players aiming for university scholarships. Up to 12 hours of tennis per week plus physical and mental preparation, tournament follow-up and tours.

These sections operate alongside mainstream studies. The school offers a wide range of extracurricular clubs, including theatre, sailing, music, golf, chess, football, fishing & philosophy, UNICEF club, and a mountain activities section, all integrated into weekly modules. Additionally, accommodation is available for students who wish to pursue sports not included among the school's offerings.

Artistic programs

The artistic section is open to all students entering 10th grade. Admission is selective and based on academic performance as well as the evaluation of a portfolio of practical work. Pupils take three hours of arts (visual arts or cinema-audiovisual) in 10th grade and may increase to seven hours from 11th grade by combining a specialty and an option. The program emphasizes creative experimentation through painting, sculpture, photography and video; teachers actively practice art themselves; and digital tools (studio and editing suite) are fully integrated. Monthly cultural outings to nearby cities (Annecy, Chambéry, Grenoble, Lyon) and a trip to Paris exposes students to exhibitions and performing arts.

Conclusion

Collège-Lycée Saint Joseph combines rigorous academics, vibrant arts and sports programs, welcoming boarding facilities and a values-driven community to nurture well-rounded young people. Its outstanding examination results and national ranking testify to effective teaching and student commitment. Located in the French Alps yet open to the world through languages and exchange programs, Saint Joseph prepares its graduates for success in higher education – including study in the United States – by fostering curiosity, resilience, cultural awareness and the pursuit of personal excellence.

Sample List of University Matriculations

100% of graduates pursue higher education upon completion of 12th grade. Below is a representative list of institutions where students typically continue their academic journey.

FRANCE

INSA Lyon
Sciences Po
Université Savoie Mont Blanc
Université de Lyon
EM Lyon Business School
École Polytechnique
Classe préparatoire* :
Ginette, Stanislas, Park Lyon, Berthollet

SWITZERLAND

EPFL: Swiss Institute of Technology in Lausanne
ETH Zurich

CANADA

McGill University

**Preparatory classes for entrance to elite higher education institutions are two-year post-secondary programs taken after the French Baccalauréat, designed to prepare students for competitive entrance exams to the Grandes Écoles (France's top engineering, business, and humanities schools).*