

Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School and Nursery

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115146
Local Authority	Southend-On-Sea
Inspection number	363830
Inspection dates	20–21 June 2011
Reporting inspector	Mary Summers

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	236
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Kevin Igoe
Headteacher	Sally Nutman
Date of previous school inspection	11 March 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They visited 17 lessons which were taught by 11 teachers. Meetings were held with pupils, staff and members of the governing body. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at documents associated with safeguarding procedures and school self-evaluation. They examined data and information about pupils' progress and looked at samples of their work. They also scrutinised improvement plans as well as planning for lessons and the curriculum. Minutes from meetings held by the governing body and monitoring and evaluation reports written by senior leaders and the local authority were also examined. Inspectors took account of the views of pupils and of 35 members of staff who had completed questionnaires, as well as the content of 61 questionnaires that had been returned by parents and carers.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- Girls' achievement in mathematics.
- The impact of the school's work to support pupils who speak English as an additional language.
- Pupils' independence in lessons.
- The effectiveness of the school's current arrangements in the Early Years Foundation Stage to help children make good progress.

Information about the school

Most pupils who attend this average-sized primary school come from the immediate area, although a small minority travel in from further afield. The majority are from White British backgrounds although there is a higher proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups than is found in most schools. A quarter of the pupils in the school speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average although it is growing steadily. The proportion identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average although proportions vary considerably between year groups. Many of those identified have moderate learning difficulties. The school has won a number of national awards in recent years, including Healthy Schools status and the Becta Information and Communication Technology mark.

The headteacher is new since the last inspection and there have been significant recent changes in staffing in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a good school that is continuing to improve as a result of the strong leadership and direction provided by the headteacher. Positive relationships between all members of the school community result in a concerted effort to meet the needs of each child, whatever their needs, background or ability. Pupils' progress is tracked successfully so that any underachievement is quickly identified. Well-organised and effective interventions are made to support those pupils who are not making the expected progress.

The school's strong ethos underpins all aspects of provision, but especially the good levels of care afforded to pupils. Consequently, pupils feel secure and happy, and make good progress. Their attainment is above average by the time they leave.

Most pupils enjoy coming to school and attendance is above average. Pupils learn about the importance of healthy lifestyles and most adopt them. They have an effective voice in school improvement through their work on the school council. They raise money to support local and international charities, making informed and sensitive decisions about where funds will be spent. Behaviour is good in lessons and around the school. Pupils work well independently, especially in lessons in the computer suite, where they rise enthusiastically to the high levels of challenge set.

Teaching is generally good although it is inconsistent across the school, leading to variations in pupils' rates of progress. Through effective monitoring procedures, senior leaders have correctly identified some aspects as requiring improvement and have implemented useful professional development and mentoring systems to extend teachers' skills. These are beginning to have a positive impact. Good relationships between teachers and pupils result in a pleasant, positive learning environment, where pupils work together and support each other well. However, teachers do not always use the information gained from assessments to plan activities that challenge the more-able pupils enough, and this restricts their progress. Occasionally, pupils spend too much time listening to teachers talking rather than being practically involved in activities, and this leads to them losing concentration.

The headteacher has gained the good support of staff and also parents and carers, and they share a strong commitment to improvement. Senior staff have a clear understanding of school performance. Improvement plans focus on the right key priorities but sometimes lack clear success criteria, timelines, monitoring procedures and benchmarks to secure more rapid improvement. Nonetheless, improvement since the last inspection has been good, especially in the way that assessment systems have been strengthened and target-setting systems developed. The school has a good capacity for further improvement.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen the quality and consistency of teaching by:
 - using the information from ongoing assessments more effectively to plan activities that challenge more-able pupils
 - ensuring that pupils spend the maximum time actively involved in learning rather than listening for long periods of time to teachers.
- Ensure that school improvement plans contain clear and measurable success criteria and responsibilities, so that the school leaders and governing body can accurately judge the success of initiatives and progress towards intended outcomes.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Children's skills vary considerably when they start in the nursery, but are often below those expected for their age. By the time they leave at the end of Year 6, their attainment is above average. Attainment in English has been stronger than in mathematics. The school has focused effectively this year on mathematics, especially amongst girls, whose achievement is rising as a result. Girls were actively involved in the mathematics lessons seen and their work demonstrated increasing confidence and independence.

Pupils' progress in English is especially good because of the school's focus on teaching pupils very specific strategies to enable them to write effective pieces of work in a range of different contexts. For example, Year 5 pupils learned how to write a balanced argument about the pros and cons of changing the school uniform, a topic which is currently under consideration by the school. Pupils develop excellent information and communication technology (ICT) skills because of high quality specialist teaching. In a Year 6 lesson, for instance, pupils were engrossed in an activity to enhance a video clip they had saved previously by adding appropriate sound effects. Their confidence in accessing relevant material, along with their ease in adjusting and varying volume levels, demonstrated very secure skills.

Another key feature in pupils' successful learning is the well-organised programme of small group work which supports those who are at risk of underachievement as well as pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. These sessions are lively and challenging, and pupils clearly enjoy them and make good progress. Healthy competition encourages pupils to practise multiplication facts at home in order to 'beat the clock'. Pupils who speak English as an additional language make good progress because teachers use pictures and diagrams to help these pupils understand. More-able pupils sometimes find activities too easy in lessons, completing them quickly and not making the progress of which they are capable.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. All pupils demonstrate good levels of understanding for others' feelings. They reflect sensitively on their developing religious beliefs. One pupil wrote, 'Heaven is in the sky because the sun is in the sky and Jesus is the light of the world.' Pupils develop a good understanding of each other's different cultures through regular events such as Africa day, when parents and carers visit to tell stories and describe life, for example, in Nigeria. Links with different communities within the United Kingdom and overseas are being developed to help pupils learn more about what life is like for children in places outside their own experience.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

Teachers have good subject knowledge which enables them to present lessons confidently. In a Year 6 mathematics lesson, for example, pupils gained a secure understanding of how to interpret information from a line graph because of the teacher's clear explanations and searching questions. They then went on to 'tell the story' of a line graph which represented Archimedes getting in and out of the bath. The activities set provided good levels of challenge for pupils of all abilities, including those who were more able, but this is not the case in all lessons across the school. Teachers manage behaviour well so that lessons are seldom disrupted. They use computers well to help explain new concepts. Additional adults are directed well during lessons and have a good impact on pupils' learning, especially those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language. Occasionally, when the pace of the lesson slows because too much time is spent listening to the teacher talking, pupils lose concentration and this hinders their learning.

The good curriculum supports pupils' academic and personal skills well. Specialist teaching in music and ICT enables pupils to make good and sometimes outstanding progress in these subjects. Pupils' work in the school garden has helped them to develop a good understanding of environmental issues. They also learn enterprise skills when they sell the vegetables they have grown to parents, carers and friends. Effective partnerships with

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local organisations provide useful opportunities for pupils to extend their academic, creative and sporting skills. Pupils appreciate the outstanding variety of clubs on offer and the visits to places such as the Natural History Museum and local parks to make learning relevant and interesting.

Pupils are well cared for in school. They are well known as individuals and any difficulties, academic or personal, are quickly identified. Pupils are confident that any concerns they have will be quickly addressed. One commented, 'There is always someone to help out if there is a problem.' Breakfast club provides a pleasant and healthy start to the school day. It is well attended and encourages pupils to arrive early for school. Well-established procedures help pupils transfer into new classes as they become older, and move seamlessly on to secondary education.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher has made a very positive start and accomplished a great deal in a short space of time. She has quickly gained an accurate picture of the school's performance and taken decisive action to accelerate pupils' learning and progress. Other senior leaders are taking a key role in this, leading achievement teams to evaluate the success of different initiatives. Regular 'achievement meetings' examine the outcomes of monitoring exercises, including lesson observations, test results, scrutiny of pupils' work and discussions with pupils. A rapid response is made to any emerging issues. Plans for school improvement are extensive, but they lack clear measureable outcomes and details about the responsibilities of staff and the governing body in checking their success.

Parents and carers develop good levels of trust in the staff because of the strong partnerships they have with the school. The school takes particular care to involve parents and carers who might otherwise not be involved in school life, and encourages them to take an active role in their children's education. Good links with a wide range of partners, including the Church, curriculum specialists and local secondary schools strengthen community links and offer a wealth of opportunities for pupils to develop their personal, academic and creative skills. Governance is good. The governing body represents the local community well and includes a wide range of expertise with which to support the school. Well-organised systems help the governing body gain a good deal of information about the school's performance.

Safeguarding procedures are good. Security arrangements are rigorous and regularly checked by the governing body to ensure that pupils are safe at school. New staff are vetted carefully to ensure their suitability. Staff promote equality of opportunity well.

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Senior staff track the progress of different groups of pupils carefully to identify underachievement. This has led to successful action being taken to narrow the gap in achievement between boys and girls in mathematics. Racist incidents are rare, and good procedures ensure that any that do arise are tackled promptly. The school promotes community cohesion well. There is a very strong feeling of community within the school and locality, and there are good links with other local schools and community organisations and developing links with communities further afield.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children settle in quickly to the nursery and make good progress over the two years they spend in the Early Years Foundation Stage. They quickly develop good levels of confidence and independence. A successful focus on developing children's spoken language results in them extending their vocabulary and sharing their ideas effectively. This has supported all children, but especially those who speak English as an additional language. A group of children excitedly played together on a 'pirate ship,' for example, discussing the route the ship should steer and where the treasure might be discovered. They made 'maps' for their classmates to follow. Staff tailor the curriculum closely to children's interests. Consequently children are well motivated and enthusiastic about the wide range of activities on offer.

Behaviour is good in and out of the classroom. Children have a good knowledge of how to keep safe and assemble their own healthy snacks from the range of options on offer. They are well supported by all of the adults in the class. For example, a small group of nursery children worked with an adult to measure ingredients for 'cheesy muffins'. They counted out the number of paper cases so that everyone in the class, plus all the adults, could

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enjoy one each. Children made good progress in their spoken language, mathematical development and personal skills.

Leadership is good. The new staffing arrangements are working well and ensuring that children receive a good range of experiences. Adults are suitably qualified and supervise children well to make sure they are safe and secure. Links with parents and carers are very effective in ensuring that information is shared so that any concerns or problems can be quickly addressed. However, information from adults' ongoing assessment of children's progress is not always used well enough to plan activities to meet children's different needs, especially for those who are more able.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

The proportion of parental questionnaires returned was lower than average. Parents and carers who did respond are positive about the school's work. Almost all say that their children enjoy school, that leadership and management are good and that the school helps their children adopt healthy lifestyles. Their positive views were endorsed by inspection findings. A small minority expressed concern about their children's progress at school. Inspectors observed lessons in every class, looked at pupils' work books and their records of progress and talked with senior managers. Their evidence confirmed that although progress is good overall, there are variations between classes. Inspectors noted that the school was aware of these variations and is addressing them effectively.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School and Nursery to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 61 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 236 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	44	72	16	26	1	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	42	69	16	26	1	2	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	29	48	29	48	2	3	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	29	48	24	39	5	8	2	3
The teaching is good at this school	33	54	21	34	5	8	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	26	43	33	54	1	2	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	33	54	27	44	1	2	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	34	56	22	36	1	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	32	52	23	38	5	8	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	36	59	21	34	3	5	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	31	51	22	36	2	3	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	40	66	20	33	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	44	72	14	23	1	2	1	2

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 December 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



22 June 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School and Nursery, Southend-on-Sea, SS1 2RF

Thank you so much for welcoming us recently to your school and giving us your opinions about the school. Your views, along with everything else that we saw, helped us to get to know your school and how well it works. You go to a good school. Here are some of the things we liked best.

You work hard in class and make good progress.

You understand how to keep safe, healthy and fit.

You behave well in lessons and in the playground.

You are kind to each other and respect one another's different views and cultures.

Adults look after you well so you are confident to ask for help if you need it.

You do lots of jobs and activities in school to help the adults and each other, and raise funds to help children who are not as fortunate as yourselves.

The people in charge are working well with your parents and carers to make sure you are happy and healthy.

There are a few things that could be even better in your school. We have asked the teachers to check your progress more carefully, and to use the information to plan activities that will help you make better progress, especially those of you can learn quickly. We have also asked them to make sure that you are more actively involved in lessons because you told us that this helps you to learn more effectively - and we agree! Finally, we have asked the people in charge to write more detailed plans to make sure that things improve at a faster rate.

You all can play your part in helping your school become better by making sure you work hard, behave well and attend school every day unless you are ill.

Yours sincerely

Mary Summers

Lead inspector

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