

Sacred Heart RC Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108504
Local Authority	Newcastle upon Tyne
Inspection number	288120
Inspection date	17 May 2007
Reporting inspector	Janice Stephenson

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	210
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Dominic Dimambro
Headteacher	Mr Kevin Foster
Date of previous school inspection	1 October 2001
School address	Convent Road Fenham Newcastle upon Tyne Tyne and Wear NE4 9XZ
Telephone number	0191 2746695
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Sacred Heart is an average sized school. Pupils come from a variety of social backgrounds and this is reflected in their attainment on entry, which is average. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is lower than average, as is the percentage who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The school population has changed in recent years and the number of children from minority ethnic backgrounds, including those who have English as an additional language, is increasing and is above average. The vast majority of these children are currently in Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1. The school has a Children's Centre on site, as well as a breakfast and after school club.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Sacred Heart School provides a high quality education for its pupils within a very safe, secure and caring environment. The school judges itself to be outstanding and it is right to do so. As one child said, 'this is a fantastic school because my teachers help me to learn and play'. It is a school where the achievements, personal development and well being of pupils are the first priority for everyone involved. The very supportive yet demanding culture allows pupils to flourish as individuals and to achieve very high standards by the time they leave school.

The school's success is down to the inspirational leadership of the headteacher and the unremitting commitment of staff and governors to provide the very best education for the pupils in their care. Pupils are provided with an interesting range of rich and exciting learning opportunities both in and out of school, as well as being encouraged to respect and value all individuals. They consequently have the necessary skills to become very confident, successful learners prepared for next steps in life. This is borne out by the very good achievements of pupils.

From an average starting point when children begin the Reception class, the combination of good teaching, very good support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and an excellent curriculum ensures that standards are well above average by the end of Year 6 with pupils achieving very well overall. Children make a very good start in the Reception class because outstanding teaching ensures that their needs and abilities are fully met. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 make good progress and attain standards that are above average in reading and mathematics and average in writing. Pupils maintain good standards in Years 3 and 4 but sometimes progress in writing among higher attaining pupils slows with missed opportunities to challenge them to make better progress and build upon their current skills and knowledge. Progress in Years 5 and 6 is rapid and pupils achieve very well and reach standards that are significantly higher than average. This is because teachers have particularly high expectations, provide consistent challenge, and pinpoint accurately what pupils have to do to improve their work. All staff know the pupils exceptionally well and relationships are excellent. Assessment systems are rigorous and provide staff with a clear picture of what needs to be done to ensure that all pupils achieve highly. This is particularly the case for pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds, including those who have English as an additional language and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

The school's strong commitment to a broad and dynamic curriculum means that pupils have rich opportunities to develop their skills and talents in other subjects such as art, music and sport. All pupils have an excellent understanding of how to stay healthy, keep themselves and others safe and how to become responsible members of the school, local community and the wider world. Pupils work very hard to raise funds to support children facing poverty in this country and beyond. The school sees these skills as paramount to pupils becoming successful young citizens.

The school has outstanding links with parents. One parent wrote 'Sacred Heart is a wonderful school. It has a lovely family atmosphere and children look after each other'. Another parent said 'The school puts in a great deal of effort into giving my child a high standard of education'. These comments illustrate the very good balance the school has achieved in developing pupils' personal and academic skills.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure consistency of good progress in writing, particularly for high attaining pupils.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Pupils achieve very well overall and by the time they leave school they are attaining standards that are significantly higher than the national average. When children join the Reception class their levels of attainment are typical for their age. The very effective teaching ensures that children make very good progress and by the time they move into Year 1 they are reaching at least the learning goals with some exceeding the national expectations for their age. Pupils make good progress in Years 1 and 2 and reach above average standards by the end of Year 2 in reading and mathematics. They reach average standards in writing. Few able pupils reach high levels in this aspect of literacy. Good progress continues through Year 3 and 4 for most pupils in English, mathematics and science but higher attaining pupils do not always make the gains expected in writing. However, pupils' progress accelerates and they achieve very well in Years 5 and 6, particularly in writing. This is because work takes better account of pupils' individual needs and abilities and adds greater challenge to the most able, ensuring that they apply their writing skills and move swiftly on to the next steps in their learning. Pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds, those who have English as an additional language and pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make very good progress. This is because extra support is deployed where the need is greatest and very good use is made of the strong links the school has established with other agencies and parents to fully support their learning.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Children's personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. The school excels in this aspect of its work. Attendance is good and pupils enjoy coming to school very much and they say that the school is 'great, fantastic and wonderful!'. Pupils' behaviour is excellent and they are exceptionally polite and friendly because they realise that this makes living in a community so much easier. All pupils relish the opportunities to care for each other and everyone is vigilant in ensuring that the school is a happy, safe and welcoming place. Pupils are very proud of the contribution they make to the school and the wider world through the work of the School Council. Their pro-active approach to fund raising has helped to support many charities in Third World countries. One pupil said 'We want to make a difference to this world and help to stop poverty'. This very high level of concern for all humanity permeates throughout the school and is central to the strong Christian ethos established through the school community. All pupils fully understand the benefits of healthy eating and physical activity and, even the youngest children, know how to keep very safe. The high standards and social responsibility established among pupils prepares them well for the next stage in their learning.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is good and this ensures that pupils make at least good progress throughout the school. All teachers know their pupils very well and relationships are exemplary. The varied

teaching styles and resources enable pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds, including those who have English as an additional language and pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to make very good progress. Parents of these children are very appreciative of the school's strong commitment to their learning and development. Teachers use very good resources, including the excellent information and communication technology (ICT) to motivate and interest pupils. Teaching in the Reception class is outstanding because the teacher is very clear about what she wants the children to learn and activities are planned which fully support their needs and abilities. Teachers use information from day to day assessments well to help pinpoint next steps of learning. This is particularly the case in Years 5 and 6 where well matched and challenging work brings relevance and enjoyment to learning and accelerates the pace of progress. However, teaching in Years 3 and 4 sometimes lacks challenge for higher attaining pupils in writing, because teachers do not always build quickly enough on the learning that has gone before.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The excellent curriculum is vibrant, varied and adapted well to suit the needs of pupils and their families. The breakfast club, the excellent recreational facilities and the many after school clubs all contribute to pupils' very good achievement. The recently established Children's Centre and the links with the school through the work of the Reception teacher is ensuring continuity of learning for young children. The many excellent art displays around the school illustrate the school's commitment to an exhilarating curriculum which equips pupils exceptionally well for living in the 21st century. The school uses all spaces, no matter how small, to provide very good facilities for pupils of all ages. For example, the outdoor learning area for Reception children is excellent and fully supports their very good progress. The outstanding programme of social and health education permeates all lessons and activities. This helps to support pupils' excellent values of trust, respect and tolerance.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The outstanding level of care, guidance and support enables pupils to achieve very well. Parents particularly value the way the school realises that it is only when pupils are happy, safe and secure that they will be effective learners who can achieve their full potential. This emphasis on being secure can be seen in the way the youngest children talk openly and sensitively about safety issues. Child protection procedures and all other checks to safeguard children's welfare, health and safety are in place. Highly skilled support staff, along with outside agencies provide very good quality support for minority ethnic pupils, including those who have English as an additional language and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. This helps secure their very good progress. Pupils' academic progress is tracked well and they know exactly what they need to do to improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The headteacher's outstanding leadership and management are pivotal to the school's success. He has created a very positive culture in which all pupils are fully included in the life and work of the school. This enables them to thrive and develop as individuals and to achieve their full

potential in attaining very high standards by the time they leave the school. The Senior Management Team is aware, through the good monitoring procedures, that higher attaining pupils in Years 3 and 4 could be further challenged to make better progress in writing. The leadership team is effective and they work very well together and are now identifying different groups of pupils who would benefit from additional support. There is a tangible team spirit among the staff and all are valued and encouraged to develop and use their particular skills to promote pupils' learning and well being. Improvements since the last inspection have been excellent.

Governors are very knowledgeable about their school and rigorous in their desire to continually provide the best education for pupils. This can be seen in the way governors have allocated finances to improve the fabric of the building, the playground and resources. They spend significant amounts of time in school ensuring that pupils receive the very best opportunities and they are fully involved in evaluation processes.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

18 May 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Sacred Heart RC Primary School, Tyne and Wear, NE4 9XZ

Thank you for making me so welcome when I visited your school recently. I enjoyed being in your school very much. You really helped me to understand how it works and what makes it such a brilliant place.

Your school is an outstanding school. I was very impressed with your behaviour and the way in which you look after each other. You told me that you enjoy school very much and this shows in the obvious pride you have when talking about all the different things you do. This was particularly the case when you spoke about the many activities you have to raise funds for other children who face poverty around the world. The chair of your school council said 'We want to make a difference to this world and help to stop poverty'. I think this is an admirable thing to do. Well done!

One of you said to me 'this school is great because it's fun and I get to do lots of things'. I agree with you! You all work very hard to achieve as much as you can but I think that some of you can work a little harder in writing. I have asked your teachers to work with you to make sure that you make as much progress as you possible can in this.

Everyone works very hard to make sure that you are happy, well cared for and enjoy your learning.

It was a privilege to spend some time with you. I hope that you will continue to enjoy school as much as you do now and that it will help you to become happy and successful adults.

Jan Stephenson

Lead inspector