

Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112363
Local Authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	357090
Inspection dates	11–12 October 2010
Reporting inspector	Brian Dower

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 of pupils on the school roll	201
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Steve Entwistle
Headteacher	Mrs Sandra White
Date of previous school inspection	3 October 2007
School address	Lumley Street Barrow-in-Furness Cumbria LA14 2BA
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. They visited 15 lessons and observed the work of seven teachers. Meetings were held with groups of pupils, staff, three governors and a representative of the local authority. Inspectors spoke to parents and carers during the course of the inspection. They observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documentation, including pupils' work, monitoring and assessment records, minutes of the governing body's meetings, school improvement planning and curriculum and lesson plans. Thirty seven completed questionnaire returns from parents and carers were analysed, together with a sample from staff and pupils.

- The quality of learning in lessons, particularly pupils' ability to sustain concentration and work well collaboratively and independently.
- The extent to which learning activities are challenging and enjoyable.
- The monitoring of learning in lessons and the advice given on how to improve.
- Pupils' behaviour and the extent to which they are considerate and supportive of each other.
- Pupils' openness to new ideas and their tolerance and respect for differences in others' beliefs and cultures.
- The extent to which pupils are contributing to the improvement of their school and the wider community.

Information about the school

The school is similar in size to the average primary school. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average and that of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is well below. Most pupils are White British but there is a small proportion from minority ethnic backgrounds. The school has a number of awards, including Healthy School status and the Activemark. It has received the Challenge Award from the National Association for Able Children in Education.

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. Attainment is average. Pupils make good progress. From starting points that are well below those expected for their age pupils have made good headway by the time they leave the school. The quality of the work seen in lessons shows that pupils' progress is rapid for all groups, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds.

Pupils say they feel secure in school and safe working is evident in its daily working. Pupils have a good understanding of how to stay fit and well and they eat healthy lunches and take plenty of exercise. The school council has been active in securing improvements to play equipment and contributing suggestions which have been incorporated into the new building work. The older pupils take on many responsibilities, helping to care for the younger ones and acting as librarians and mentors. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. They are very polite and respectful and actively encourage and support each other around school. They have extensive sporting and cultural links with the local and wider communities and work effectively to support those children who are less fortunate than themselves in this country and abroad.

Teaching is predominantly good and at times outstanding. The work of the teaching assistants is highly effective in ensuring that all groups progress well. Staff foster pupils' speaking skills in the conversations they have in group and paired activities but opportunities are missed to enable pupils to speak at length about their learning. Insufficient attention is being paid to the presentation of pupils' written work and to ensuring that assignments are always completed. Enrichment activities are extensive and make a major contribution to pupils' personal development and their enjoyment of school. The excellent care and support afforded to all pupils ensure they feel part of a family community where they are respected and valued. As a result they work well and look forward to coming to school each day.

The school is at the centre of the local community. Its influence for good extends beyond this, particularly in its charity work and in pupils' involvement in social and cultural activities with the wider ethnic communities. There have been significant improvements since the previous inspection in the use of assessments to provide challenging work for all pupils and to guide them on how to improve. Standards have risen. The work the school has done in developing the leadership potential of many of the staff has resulted in good leadership at all levels and some outstanding practice in terms of the guidance and support those leaders provide to their colleagues and to pupils. Self evaluation is effective and leads to well focused areas for improvement. There is now more outstanding teaching in the school than in the past. The school's capacity to build upon its strengths is good.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by:
 - extending opportunities for pupils to talk at length about their learning in contexts other than group and paired activities
 - improving pupils' ability to present their written work coherently and at length
 - implementing consistently a planned approach to ensure all pupils complete their written tasks and any gaps in learning are minimised.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils enjoy their work and most attend school regularly and participate in the wide range of enrichment activities. They work well independently and collaboratively and concentrate for extended periods of time. Behaviour is good and pupils are supportive and considerate of each other. They say that everyone gets on well together no matter what their social, cultural and religious background. Pupils' suggestions about topics that interest them, the visits away they would like to make and the teaching styles that are most conducive to their learning have been taken up. Overall attendance is below average but improving. The school's rigorous monitoring has led to a reduction in persistent absence and in particular for those pupils who are potentially vulnerable. The school is already working very closely with parents to reduce the number of holidays taken in term time to improve attendance further. Pupils understand right from wrong and they have a keen sense of fair play. They think carefully about the consequences of their own actions and learn to work out their own solutions to any inappropriate actions. Their spiritual development is highly developed because they think deeply about their relationships with each other and the world around them.

There was a dip in the school's performance in 2009, particularly in English. This has been reversed. This year, overall attainment by the end of Year 6 in English was average, and more pupils achieved at the higher Level 5. Attainment in mathematics has also improved to average from slightly below in 2009. Such good progress is being maintained in the work seen now. Pupils have good literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills but speaking skills are less well developed, and the presentation of some pupils' work is not as good as it could be. Pupils are satisfactorily prepared for the next stage in their education.

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

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	3
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	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	4
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

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 high expectations of pupils. They make good use of accurate assessments to set them challenging and interesting learning activities. They and the teaching assistants rigorously monitor learning in lessons and through regular checking of pupils' books. The written and oral guidance pupils receive enables them to improve their work, contributing to the overall rise in attainment this year. However, teachers' written comments and inspection evidence show that there are a minority of pupils who find difficulty writing at length and in completing their work in the time allocated. Pupils communicate well in group and paired activities but opportunities are missed for class discussion of work. The school is highly effective in identifying and meeting the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, those who are potentially vulnerable and those from minority ethnic backgrounds. Outstanding teaching was seen with these groups. Outstanding teaching was also seen with the older Key Stage 2 pupils, particularly in challenging the most able. The curriculum is enriched by many visits out and talks from people from diverse occupations and backgrounds.

The school provides a very caring and sensitive environment and gives a high priority to supporting pupils and their families. Christian values, the impact of the well-planned personal, social and health education programme and the general ethos of exceptional care and respect for all the pupils ensure that barriers to learning are broken down. Attendance is monitored rigorously and as a result the school has successfully reduced the

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number of persistent absence. The school works very effectively with outside agencies to support the very small number of pupils whose attendance is a concern.

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	1

How effective are leadership and management?

Leaders and managers are highly effective at all levels. Their drive and ambition are shared by all the staff, who work hard to give every boy and girl an equal chance. The good progress made by all groups is testimony to the success with which the school is led and managed. Good use is made of challenging performance targets to raise attainment. The school works closely with parents to enable them to support their children in their learning and with a range of other institutions and services to broaden the curriculum and promote pupils' well-being. The school has evaluated the impact it is having on the local and wider community. This is extensive. It makes a strong contribution to the integration of families from minority ethnic backgrounds. It has productive links with a wide range of community groups, including those concerned with promoting science, technology and engineering. It undertakes extensive charity work for causes in this country and abroad. The school itself is a cohesive and harmonious working community. The governing body is well informed and closely involved in the day-to-day life of the school. It provides encouragement and support and asks the right questions. Safeguarding procedures are well established and understood and followed by all. Risk assessments are undertaken for practical activities and outside visits and health and safety audits are conducted on a regular basis. The school gives good value for money.

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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	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Although attainment on entry to the school varies, the overall level of children's skills when they start in the Reception class is low, particularly in their language and numeracy skills and in their emotional and social development. Children settle quickly and are soon happy and secure because of excellent induction arrangements and close and supportive links with parents and carers. They then make good progress and by the time they enter Year 1 attainment is just below average. This is because of the understanding the adults have of the children's needs and their ability to tailor provision to meet them. For example, children have extensive opportunities to explore for themselves the natural world outdoors, thus giving them the confidence they need to be adventurous and learn independently. They then record their experiences on digital cameras, showing them the potential of technology as an aid for independent learning. The 'Talk Homework' is used exceptionally well to enable children and their families to work together at home in developing speaking and listening skills. The Early Years Foundation Stage is very well led, particularly in creating a warm and stimulating learning environment indoors and outside, and in ensuring that the children are always safe and that their welfare is paramount. The outdoor provision is still being developed and there are plans in place to extend outdoor provision further in the very near future.

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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

A small minority of parents and carers returned completed questionnaires. Of these, almost all were fully supportive of the school and expressed appreciation of what the staff are doing to support their children and ensure they are receiving a good education. The very few concerns recorded related to individual problems and there was no pattern of dissatisfaction.

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 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 37 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 201 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	19	51	16	43	1	3	1	3
The school keeps my child safe	21	57	15	41	0	0	1	3
My school informs me about my child's progress	17	46	18	49	1	3	1	3
My child is making enough progress at this school	15	41	18	49	2	5	1	3
The teaching is good at this school	17	46	18	49	0	0	1	3
The school helps me to support my child's learning	17	46	18	49	0	0	1	3
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	18	49	17	46	1	3	1	3
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)	14	38	21	57	0	0	1	3
The school meets my child's particular needs	16	43	20	54	0	0	1	3
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	14	38	20	54	2	5	1	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	17	46	18	49	0	0	1	3
The school is led and managed effectively	16	43	19	51	0	0	1	3
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	17	46	19	51	0	0	1	3

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	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

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 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 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. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

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.



13 October 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School, Barrow-in-Furness LA14 2BA

Thank you for the warm welcome we received when we visited your school, particularly those of you who gave your time to talk to us about how much you enjoy your work and the many activities you take part in outside of lessons. You made a valuable contribution to the inspection.

You attend a good school where the staff do all they can to support and encourage you. The care you receive is excellent. You respond by behaving well and working hard. You make good progress and are becoming responsible and thoughtful young people. You make a significant contribution to improving your school through suggestions for better equipment and through putting forward ideas that will help you in your learning. You are also involved in many social and cultural activities in the local and wider community, including links with others from different backgrounds to yours. As a result you have an excellent understanding of their beliefs and way of life.

A few pupils find difficulty presenting their work well and some of the work seen in your books is unfinished. There are pupils who lack confidence when speaking to large groups. We have asked the staff to help those pupils improve in these areas.

The children in the Early Years Foundation Stage settle quickly and learn a great deal in their first year. They work and play well together and have the confidence to be adventurous and find out things for themselves. Please talk to them about how impressed we were with their hard work and the good progress they are making.

Thank you again for making our two days with you so enjoyable. Our best wishes to you all. We know the school already does a lot of work to improve your attendance. You can help by making sure that you attend each day so that you do not miss out on any of your lessons.

Yours sincerely

Mr Brian Dower

Lead inspector

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