

Sacred Heart RC Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108504
Local authority	Newcastle Upon Tyne
Inspection number	395314
Inspection dates	23–24 May 2012
Lead inspector	Margaret Armstrong

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	210
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Harrison
Headteacher	Kevin Foster
Date of previous school inspection	17 May 2007
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Introduction

Inspection team

Margaret Armstrong
Philip Scott

Additional Inspector
Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspectors observed 12 lessons taught by six teachers. Meetings were held with two groups of pupils, members of the governing body and school staff, including senior leaders. The inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection. They observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documentation including assessment and tracking information, the school development plan, and the school's monitoring records. They also looked at documentation relating to safeguarding procedures and analysed 82 parental and carers' questionnaires and others completed by pupils and staff.

Information about the school

This is an average-sized primary school. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds. However, a significant proportion of pupils are from a variety of cultural backgrounds, most of whom speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is average. The proportion of disabled pupils, those who are supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average. The school meets the current floor standards which are the minimum standards expected by the government for attainment and progress. The school has achieved the International School Award, Fairtrade status, Investing in Children Award, the Green Flag Eco-School Award and the Healthy School status. At the time of the inspection pupils from Year 5 were out of school taking part in a residential visit.

There is a children's centre and before- and after-school clubs, which are managed independently of the school and did not form part of this inspection. Separate reports for these provisions can be found on the Ofsted website.

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	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	1
Leadership and management	2

Key Findings

- This is a good school. It is not outstanding because most teaching is good, rather than excellent and aspects of leadership and management lack some rigour.
- Pupils achieve well. Attainment is above average by the end of Year 6 and pupils make good progress from their starting points. Disabled pupils, those who have special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language make good progress because of the effective support they receive. Parents and carers are very positive about every aspect of the school’s work and talk about, ‘the welcoming school where pupils are very well cared for’.
- Teaching is good overall. Most teachers have high expectations of pupils. They use their subject knowledge well to plan interesting activities which engage and motivate pupils. Mostly, teachers’ assessments are accurate and support learning well. Occasionally, however, teaching is satisfactory because teachers do not challenge the more-able pupils appropriately and this slows down the pace of learning. Although there is some good practice, marking does not always indicate to pupils how they can improve their work.
- Pupils enjoy school and have excellent attitudes to learning. This is reflected in their above-average attendance. Excellent relationships ensure that pupils behave exceptionally well and are motivated to learn. Pupils say they feel very safe and know who to turn to if they have a problem. Pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding.
- The highly effective headteacher leads an enthusiastic team who make good use of a range of monitoring activities and performance management to improve teaching and pupils’ outcomes. However, monitoring is not yet rigorous enough to ensure teaching is consistently good or better across the school. Leaders and managers promote positive working relationships based on the strong Christian ethos which pervades the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- By the summer of 2013, improve the quality of teaching to at least good, by:
 - increasing the sense of urgency in teaching so that pupils work more quickly to complete tasks and less time is taken to move from one activity to another
 - ensuring that teachers make better use of assessment information to plan a consistently high level of challenge for the more-able pupils
 - giving pupils clearer indications of how to improve their work through feedback in lessons and marking.
- Strengthen monitoring and evaluation in the school by:
 - establishing clearer formal routines for undertaking monitoring activities throughout the year
 - providing further training for senior leaders in order to bring more rigour to lesson observations and to the scrutiny of pupils' written work
 - making sure that the outcomes of monitoring and evaluation are used more effectively to drive improvement.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

In lessons, pupils willingly share their ideas and exchange their views with a partner or with the whole class. Even the youngest children happily enter into conversation with each other, listen well and take turns to speak. Children settle happily in the friendly atmosphere of the Reception class and their keenness to learn is fostered well. From starting points that are generally below those typical for their age, often with notably weaker communication skills, children make good progress. This is because children's early listening, speech and language are promoted well. In Key Stages 1 and 2, where teaching is clearly focused and offers pupils opportunities to engage with tasks which provide a good level of challenge, pupils make good progress. For example, in an English lesson in Year 3 pupils were totally engrossed in developing their writing skills when preparing a letter to a friend in Mexico. Occasionally, less-demanding activities and too much teacher direction cause progress to slow.

By the end of Year 6, pupils' attainment in English and mathematics is above average. This represents good overall progress from pupils' starting points. However, there are fluctuations in progress in different year groups depending on the quality of teaching; in some classes progress is satisfactory and in others outstanding. Pupils make consistently rapid progress in Years 5 and 6, because teaching is exciting and activities are stimulating. Disabled pupils, those with special educational needs, those who because of their circumstances are potentially vulnerable and those at the very early stages of learning English as an additional language, make good progress because of the effective support they receive. The consistent approach to the teaching of sounds and letters ensures that pupils make good progress in developing their reading skills. Attainment in reading is broadly average by the end of Year 2 and above average by the time pupils leave the school. Although attainment in mathematics is generally higher than in English, leaders and managers are tackling this difference effectively and, consequently, the gap is closing rapidly and securely.

Almost all parents and carers believe their children are making good progress. Generally, inspection evidence supports this view, although where teaching is no better than satisfactory the more-able pupils do not always achieve as well as they should.

Quality of teaching

Parents and carers believe that teaching is good and inspection evidence generally supports this view. Teachers set high expectations and promote very positive relationships with pupils. They understand how pupils learn best and in lessons provide a good balance of teacher input and pupil activity. Consequently, pupils have regular opportunities to learn independently or take the lead in learning. This was seen in an outstanding lesson in Year 6 where pupils worked exceptionally well in pairs to prepare an 'Olympic Website'. This demonstrated how teaching promotes spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very well. Pupils are eager to learn because teachers use a range of exciting activities and resources. Usually, lessons proceed at a good pace and there are many opportunities for pupils to practise their basic skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology. This was seen in Year 2, where pupils made good progress in developing their skills in solving number problems because the teacher used quick-fire questioning well to build on their prior learning.

Teachers are skilled at intervening when pupils need individual support. They are quick to pick up any gaps in pupils' learning and to provide clear guidance to enable pupils to achieve well. Disabled pupils, those with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language, are taught well because work is clearly focussed on their needs and they have the opportunity to engage with tasks under the guidance of skilled teaching assistants.

Increasingly, the good curriculum is having a positive impact in providing more challenging and enjoyable activities. This promotes pupils' keen interest and enthusiasm for learning. For example, a group of children in the Reception class were totally engrossed in acting in role as bears and owls after listening to the story *Whatever next?* Pupils demonstrate growing confidence in considering alternatives before applying their skills to solve problems. Occasionally, where teaching is less inspiring activities can be too drawn out and questioning does not challenge the more-able pupils' thinking enough to extend their learning. Pupils' work is marked frequently and regularly. Although there are examples of informative marking, with indicators for improvement that help pupils make progress and meet their targets, marking and feedback do not always provide pupils with sufficient information on what they need to do to move onto the next steps in learning.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

The pupils say overwhelmingly that they feel safe in the school and that adults are very approachable if they have any concerns. Pupils have an excellent understanding of the risks to which they may be exposed, both within and outside school. They feel the school helps them learn how to stay safe through the organisation of an extensive range of safety events which are promoted through 'The Sacred Heart Goals'. Attendance is above the national average and pupils arrive punctually to school and to lessons. The importance of good attendance is promoted through the very effective use of rewards which motivate pupils to attend regularly. Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. The inspectors analysed the school's records of behaviour over time and talked to many pupils during lessons, at break times and more formally in discussions. The headteacher and staff have extremely high expectations of

standards of behaviour and attitudes to learning. All pupils are keen to help and support each other. This has a positive impact on their enthusiasm and enjoyment of learning. Pupils manage their own behaviour very well in the classroom and around the school. They fully understand the Christian principles which underpin the highly positive atmosphere of respect and consideration for others. Pupils understand that there are different forms of bullying. Incidents of bullying of any kind are extremely rare and most parents, carers and pupils express confidence in the school's systems for dealing with such occurrences. In the words of one pupil, 'Bullying is not allowed here. We are all close friends.' The school makes very effective use of the expertise of a range of agencies to provide tailored support for pupils experiencing difficulties that affect their behaviour or attendance.

Leadership and management

Strong leadership and management provide the school with a sharp and effective focus on improvement. The clarity of direction, well-planned professional development and good partnership work with parents, carers and external agencies have contributed well to the improving outcomes for pupils and to better provision, including the quality of teaching. School leaders have demonstrated their ability to bring about improvement and parents and carers acknowledge this. Consequently, the school has a good capacity to improve further.

The school evaluates its effectiveness accurately. The outcomes are used astutely to plan for improvement. Currently, the collection and analysis of assessment data feature strongly in the school's monitoring processes. This contributes to the setting of challenging targets for individual pupils and demonstrates the school's successful commitment to promoting equality of opportunity for all groups of pupils. The other aspects of monitoring, such as scrutiny of written work and lesson observations, although undertaken, are neither frequent nor rigorous enough in focusing on the impact of teaching on pupils' learning.

The impact of the curriculum on pupils' learning and progress is good. The curriculum is currently being adapted to ensure that the needs of all pupils are fully met through a thematic approach to learning. The curriculum very effectively supports pupils who are at an early stage of learning English as an additional language. There is a consistent approach to teaching literacy, numeracy and other key skills across the curriculum. As a result, the school has been successful in raising the achievement of the most-able pupils in writing.

Leaders succeed well in ensuring that pupils flourish in a happy, cohesive school community. A particular strength of the school's work is the breadth of work undertaken to support pupils' understanding of cultural diversity. The school's involvement in 'The Worldwide Network of Sacred Heart Schools' provides extensive opportunities for pupils to learn about other cultures. This promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development exceptionally well. The governing body has extended its role in holding the school to account and is influential in determining the strategic direction of the school. There is a clear understanding of key responsibilities, especially those which require rigorous assurance checks. As a result safeguarding procedures fully meet requirements.

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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data 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.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

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

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



25 May 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Sacred Heart RC Primary School, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, NE4 9XZ

Thank you for making the team so welcome when we came to inspect your school recently. A particular 'thank you' goes to those of you who filled in the questionnaires or met with us to read aloud or talk about your school and the progress you are making. We were really impressed with your excellent behaviour and your very good attitudes to work. We know the adults in school make sure you are well looked after and we know you feel very safe in school. Your teachers know each one of you well and find lots of interesting ways to help you learn and develop. As a result you make good progress and achieve well. Well done!

We found that your school is providing you with a good quality of education. Teachers and their assistants know exactly how much progress you are making and organise extra help if you start to fall behind. The headteacher, staff and governors have your best interests at heart and they are dedicated to making sure you do well. It is clear you have many interesting experiences at school but we have asked the headteacher and governors to help you even more by checking in lessons and in your books on how well you are doing. So that more teaching is outstanding we have also asked your teachers to always plan more challenging work for those of you who are working at a higher level and to help you more by giving you clearer guidance on what you need to do to improve further.

You can all play your part by continuing to work as hard as you can. Thank you again for welcoming us to your school.

Yours sincerely

Margaret Armstrong
Lead Inspector

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