

Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School

Selby Street, Warrington, Cheshire, WA5 1NS

Inspection dates

6–7 February 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Sacred Heart Primary is like a large happy family: everyone is welcome, everyone is included and, according to pupils, 'learning is fun.'
- Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the ethos and atmosphere at Sacred Heart. A comment from a parent was typical of those expressed by parents, 'I have always found the teachers to have a good understanding of my son, with high expectations and good teaching and learning.'
- Because almost all teaching is good, most pupils make good progress and achieve well. In some year groups such as Years 1, 5 and 6, pupils make rapid progress because the teaching is high quality.
- The school has improved since the previous inspection. Pupils' achievement in mathematics had increased, the more able pupils make better progress, pupils' attendance has improved and teaching is better.
- The improvements are because of excellent leadership by the headteacher, impressive systems to check on and improve the school's work and a high-quality curriculum.
- Leaders and managers still have some improvements to make to raise the quality of teaching in each year group to match the best.
- Leaders have improved pupils' attitudes to learning and their involvement in lessons which are key factors in why pupils' behaviour and safety are now outstanding. Pupils are highly respectful, thoughtful and considerate of others.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- There are a few gaps between the achievement of different groups of pupils in different year groups such as boys and girls, and those who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are not.
- In some lessons, teachers do not use the responses from pupils as well as they could to extend pupils' thinking and understanding and to quicken their progress.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 14 lessons in subjects such as history, science, French, English, mathematics and music. Inspectors also took a learning walk to observe pupils' learning in small groups taught by teaching assistants.
- Inspectors held meetings with members of the governing body, a representative from the local authority, with senior leaders and with teachers. Inspectors also met three groups of pupils and heard a range of pupils read.
- When making the judgements, inspectors took into account the 22 responses to Ofsted's online survey (Parent View) and the school's own survey of the views of parents and a letter from a parent. They also considered the views of 20 staff who took part in a survey and the views of pupils who completed a school survey.
- Inspectors took into account evidence from the school's behaviour logs including exclusion records, evidence about how well pupils attend, the school's self-evaluation of how well it judges its own effectiveness and the school's development plan. Inspectors also considered school documents and policies some of which are available on the school's website.

Inspection team

Allan Torr, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Maureen Hints

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school has fewer pupils than the average-sized primary school.
- Pupil premium is money allocated by the government to support the achievement of pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, those who are looked after by the local authority and those who have parents who are in the armed forces. The proportion of pupils at Sacred Heart Primary, supported by this money, is lower than average.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is above average.
- The large majority of pupils are White British but there is a relatively large proportion of pupils from a Philippines heritage.
- In 2012, the proportion of pupils who have been identified as having special educational needs (school action) was double the national average. The proportion of pupils supported by extra funds from the local authority because they have a statement of special educational needs or because they are identified as school action plus is less than average. There are no pupils with an identified disability.
- Pupils' attainment and achievement is above national floor targets (the minimum expected by the government).
- At the time of the inspection, no pupil was being educated off-site in alternative provision.
- There is a breakfast and after-school club run by an external provider.
- The school has gained a number of recent awards including the Primary Quality Mark, Eco Schools and Healthy School status.
- Pupils come from a large catchment area to the school and the local authority has a contract with a bus company to provide a bus service to enable them to get to and from the school.
- Since the last inspection there have been considerable changes to the school building. A deputy headteacher was appointed in 2010 and the leadership of the school has been restructured.
- The headteacher is a mentor to new headteachers in the local authority and the systems for checking on the school's work are being shared with other schools across Warrington.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Close any remaining gaps between the achievement of groups of pupils by making sure all teachers use the information gathered during lessons from pupils' responses to increase and deepen pupils' thinking and understanding.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- From a wide range of starting points, pupils make good progress. Although in 2011, standards in reading and writing were below average by the end of Year 6, in 2012 they were well above the national average. Because numbers in different groups of pupils are small and because their starting points at the school are so varied there are no discernible trends in achievement over time.
- In Years 1, 5 and 6, pupils make rapid progress. In a history lesson in Year 1 for example, from knowing very little about jobs in the past at the start of the lesson, all pupils made rapid gains in their knowledge, and by the end of the lesson could analyse photographs and could write about and compare jobs in the past and present.
- There are, however, some small gaps in achievement. In Key Stage 1, for example, boys' skill in reading and writing lags behind that of girls' writing. In a few classes, pupils who are supported by the pupil premium achieve better than their peers; however, in some classes this trend is reversed. In some classes, pupils known to have special educational needs make as much progress as their peers but in other classes the progress is slower.
- Most pupils who have been identified as having special educational needs make good progress. They develop their communication skills well. For example, in a Year 6 boys' writing group, a pupil recounted a story to the rest of the group who then questioned him about the details of the incident. In another session, the teaching assistant skilfully modelled letters and the sounds they make and pupils made good progress in their blending of sounds together.
- White British and pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds, such as those from the Philippines, make good progress. Pupils who speak English as an additional language also achieve well. This is because in most lessons the teachers use visual aids, bilingual worksheets, and make a conscious effort to make lessons practical and to make sure that pupils understand what is being taught. Pupils also benefit greatly from the opportunity to work with or as a 'young translator', helping their peers to pick up and extend their skills in English.
- The school has spent the pupil premium funding from the government wisely. Small teaching groups with targeted teaching are beginning to have an impact on raising standards for this group of pupils but their achievement is still variable.

The quality of teaching is good

- In a Year 6 history lesson about entertainment in Victorian times, pupils were highly motivated from the start because of lively, exciting teaching and opportunities to work with friends in 'talking partners'. The pupils were fully involved throughout the lesson and the teacher gave pupils time to recap and build on their prior learning and to extend their knowledge and their thinking about the Victorian era. The teacher skilfully gauged pupils' understanding with well-crafted questions and extended their thinking and understanding.
- This lesson is typical of some of the outstanding teaching seen during the inspection, that is:
 - a high level of pupil activity throughout the lesson
 - using plenty of visual aids and resources to develop understanding
 - using pupils' prior learning and skills as the basis for the lesson
 - using frequent opportunities for pupils to explain their answers
 - the teachers' skilful questioning leading to pupils gaining in new knowledge as well as deepening their existing understanding.
- In a few lessons, the teaching was not as good because the adults missed chances to use the answers pupils gave to extend pupils' learning further or to deepen their understanding. Adults also sometimes missed the chance to make connections with other aspects of their work, such as in phonics (letters and the sounds they make) and reading sounds linked to writing them, and

in mathematics, multiplication linked to division, addition linked to subtraction.

- The teaching of reading is good and pupils make good progress throughout the school. By the end of Year 6 most pupils are fluent, know how to break down words they have not seen before into different letters and sounds, and most pupils read expressively. Pupils told inspectors they have the chance to read both frequently and a wide range of texts. In a few cases, adults make small errors in pronunciation when they teach phonics.
- Most teachers plan their lessons with an emphasis on what pupils need to learn next. In a highly effective spelling lesson in Year 5, the lesson was based strongly on errors pupils were making and misconceptions they had. The teacher's high-quality lesson enabled pupils to make rapid progress on how to spell plurals.
- Teachers make valuable comments to pupils in class but also in their marking. In an English lesson in Year 6, the teacher enabled pupils to look at and comment on her marking of their work. She then helped pupils to work together to edit and to work supportively as a team to refine and improve their writing. Consequently, they all made good progress.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- In most lessons, pupils are highly motivated, keen to learn, responsive to all adults and they regulate their own behaviour. This highly positive environment for learning means teachers are able to teach with few or no disruptions to the lessons and pupils learn quickly with nothing preventing their progress.
- Most teachers use their voices and their positioning in the classroom very well to establish excellent behaviour and safety. They use an effective system of rewards and sanctions to regulate pupils' behaviour. Pupils know all about these and said they work very well. Because lessons are so exciting and practical there are few chances to misbehave.
- Parents, pupils, governors and staff all agreed that most pupils' behaviour is good and it is managed well by staff. There have been very few exclusions in the last few years and incidents in behaviour records are relatively minor and there are not many of them.
- At play and break times pupils play cooperatively and safely together. The school feels like a large happy family because pupils speak positively and respectfully of each other and they play and get on together regardless of gender, of ethnicity, or whether they speak English as an additional language. This is no accident, it is because all staff and adults foster and model excellent relationships with pupils, and because leaders work very hard to tackle all types of discrimination.
- Pupils said that bullying because of someone's race, skin colour, or faith is very rare as is bullying because of differences in how people look. A few pupils said there was some inappropriate homophobic language such as, 'That's so gay!' however, it is dealt with effectively by school staff. Pupils had a very good understanding of some other types of bullying such as by using the internet and technology. Consequently, pupils said they feel very safe, as one pupil said, 'because teachers love us'.
- Pupils had a detailed understanding about how to stay safe on the roads, when using the internet and when riding bikes. The security of the site has improved significantly since the previous inspection and pupils said this helped their feeling of safety when at school.
- There has also been a significant improvement in pupils' attendance since the last inspection. From well below average in 2010, with a high proportion of pupils absent for a significant part of their education, attendance in the last and present academic year has been much improved and is around the national average.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher is a highly passionate advocate for Sacred Heart Primary, its parents, pupils and its community. She provides outstanding leadership and has steered the school through significant improvement since the last inspection in the quality of the building and classrooms, increased attendance, raised standards in mathematics, improved site security, improved curriculum and better results for the more-able pupils and improved pupil attitudes to learning.
- The performance management of teachers and improving the quality of teaching for all pupils is a high priority, and movements up the pay spine or promotional ladder have valid reasons.
- Senior leaders are open and responsive to external scrutiny. The local authority provides effective support, advice and training which has helped to strengthen governance and the quality of the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- Teachers at all levels take full responsibility for tracking pupils' progress, for checking on the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement in the subjects they lead. For example, leaders for English and mathematics: analyse pupils' work and teachers' plans; they speak to pupils about their learning; analyse the results of tests and assessments against all groups of pupils and they observe lessons. These checks then lead not only to staff training for all staff but also for individual teachers to help them improve their practice. This model of checking on teaching is repeated for all leaders and results in, as one senior leader put it, 'A culture of support and team work rather than blame.'
- Senior leaders still need to do some work to improve all teaching to match the best and to close the gaps between the achievement of different groups of pupils. They have however been effective in tackling discrimination, and achieving equality of opportunity.
- The curriculum is exciting and provides pupils with plenty of opportunities for their own research, for working independently and in groups, and for solving problems. Some of the topics are based on ethical questions and some are based on the interests of pupils, for example, 'How can we make Shrek healthy?', 'Should Nelson Mandela have been put in prison?', 'Why is winter cold?' The curriculum has also been pivotal in giving pupils a good understanding of different countries and cultures. Consequently, pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and they are well prepared for their futures in a global society.
- **The governance of the school is good.**
 - Governors receive detailed and useful reports from subject leaders and from the headteacher and most visit the school as much as possible. They have been trained by the local authority and external consultants. As a result, they have a good understanding of the quality of teaching and of how well pupils achieve. There is good oversight over the school's budget and they have made wise decisions in spending money to benefit pupils. The pupil premium, for example, has been spent on teaching assistants who are used to raise standards. Governors check on how well the money is being spent and its impact on pupils' achievement. In the past they have taken difficult decisions to restrict pay rises to teachers if they have underperformed. Governors are beginning to have the information they need to positively challenge the school to improve further. Governors have taken action to improve safeguarding of pupils through improving the fencing around the school. The systems to record checks on adults' ability to work with pupils are in place and meet requirements. Safeguarding is a high priority in the school.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	111306
Local authority	Warrington
Inspection number	401179

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	5–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	197
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Canon Christopher Cunningham
Headteacher	Mrs Colleen Everett
Date of previous school inspection	11 November 2009
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