

Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School

Broadmeads, Ware, SG12 9HY

Inspection dates 1–2 April 2014

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The headteacher has quickly united staff and governors behind her vision for the next stage of the school's development. Through her drive she has moved the school forward considerably in a short space of time.
- Governors know the school well and provide effective challenge and support for its leaders. They are committed to making sure school leaders are focused on the school's continued improvement.
- Teachers are keen to improve their teaching by sharing expertise and learning from each other. As a result, teaching is improving rapidly.
- Pupils make good progress, particularly in reading. Their attainment is well above average by the end of Year 6 in reading and writing.
- Children enjoy Reception where teaching is interesting and activities retain their attention and move their learning forward rapidly, particularly in literacy and numeracy.
- Pupils are keen to learn and want to do well. They generally work hard and attendance levels are high. Pupils feel very safe and well looked after at school.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. Pupils, parents and staff say how behaviour has improved this year thanks to the new policy and the increased responsibilities now given to pupils.
- The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is integral to all aspects of school life. The school's aim of 'Live, love and learn' permeates its daily life and underpins all that staff are seeking to promote in the pupils.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Not all teachers expect enough of the most able pupils and do not consistently challenge and extend their thinking.
- Not all teachers are as secure in their teaching of mathematics as they are in reading and writing. Pupils have limited opportunities to apply their skills to investigations and in other subjects. As a result, pupils make slower progress in mathematics.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 18 lessons. In each of these lessons, inspectors examined the work in pupils’ books. Two lessons were seen together with the headteacher.
- Meetings were held with groups of pupils, school staff, the Chair of the Governing Body and other governors. A telephone conversation was undertaken with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the 50 responses to Ofsted’s online parent questionnaire, Parent View, and held informal discussions with parents and carers at the start of the school day.
- Inspectors observed the school’s work and looked at a number of documents including the school’s own information on the pupils’ current progress, planning and monitoring documentation, records relating to behaviour and attendance, and documents relating to safeguarding.
- Inspectors also took account of the 16 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors listened to the reading of a sample of pupils in Year 2.

Inspection team

Martin Beale, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Susan Cox

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is below average in size.
- The large majority of pupils are White British.
- Only a small number of pupils are supported through the pupil premium. This is additional government funding which, in this school, is received for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is below average.
- The proportion supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is well below average.
- The headteacher was appointed in September 2013.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress by the end of Year 6.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching by making sure that teachers set work that consistently challenges the most able pupils.
- Raise achievement in mathematics by:
 - providing training for teachers to increase their expertise and confidence
 - providing pupils with more opportunities to develop their skills through mathematical investigations and by using them in other subjects.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children enter Reception with skills typical for their age. Pupils make good progress, particularly in reading and writing, and attainment is above average by the end of Year 6. Test results at the end of Year 6 fell to an average level in 2012 but rose again in 2013 to well above average. They were highest in reading where almost two thirds of pupils reached levels in excess of those expected for their age.
- Starting in Reception, early reading skills develop rapidly. Results of the screening check for phonics (the sounds that letters make) at the end of Year 1 in 2013 were high and pupils are currently on track to reach similar levels. Pupils read widely from a book list appropriate for their age provided by the school. Their comprehension skills become very refined, and almost all pupils can make deductions, inferences and predictions from the texts they read by the end of Year 6.
- Pupil premium funding is used well to support the very few eligible pupils through individual tuition and extra support in lessons. This is leading to increased progress for eligible pupils. The gap in attainment between these pupils and others in their year group is closing, having widened marginally to about one year in Year 6 in 2013.
- The small number of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs also make good progress. Additional programmes and support in lessons are determined by the carefully identified needs of each pupil. By carefully monitoring progress, adaptations are quickly made if needed.
- The headteacher has identified some factors behind the pupils' slower progress in mathematics. She has recently introduced a new mental arithmetic programme across the school to sharpen the pupils' skills. It is too early yet to judge its effectiveness, but early signs are positive. Pupils regularly solve quite complex mathematical problems but do not secure their number skills through their consistent use across different subjects or within mathematical investigations.
- The most able pupils do not consistently make good progress in all subjects. This has been identified by the headteacher, and recently the school has introduced additional tuition for these pupils. This is starting to show some benefit, but rapid progress is not consistently supported by all teachers providing high levels of challenge for these pupils in lessons.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching enables pupils to learn new skills quickly and underpins their good progress over time. Teachers generally have high expectations of what each pupil can achieve. Pupils with particular needs are supported well by additional staff who work in strong partnership with teachers.
- Most teaching quickly captures the pupils' imaginations and makes learning interesting. For example, in an English lesson in Year 5, pupils took on various roles in the trial of Shere Khan stimulated by their reading of *The Jungle Book*. They prepared their cases as the defence and prosecuting lawyers to put before the jury and were helped to refine their arguments by the teacher's skilfully phrased suggestions. This resulted in mature and convincing speeches using very powerful vocabulary and emotive phrases.
- Teachers' confident teaching and the stimulating methods and resources they use most of the

time generate enthusiasm in the pupils and help them to learn well. Teachers use searching questions to check the pupils' understanding and adapt their teaching if they perceive there are misconceptions. Many teachers challenge pupils further through follow-up questions, thus increasing the rate of progress being made.

- Teaching in Reception is based on activities well-suited to the regularly assessed learning and interests of the children. The strong emphasis on literacy and numeracy features both inside and outdoors, within sessions taught by adults and those where children develop ideas themselves. Children are settled and work well together, persevering tenaciously at tasks.
- Teachers give pupils detailed feedback through their marking. This supports their learning well by giving guidance on the steps they should take to improve their work and checking that this advice has been followed through.
- Teaching is not always interesting and challenging. Not all teachers move the learning of the most able pupils forward quickly. On occasion, work they set can be too easy and repeats skills they have already mastered. Furthermore, not all teachers are as confident in their teaching of some aspects of mathematics as they are in English. This is a further reason for the pupils' slower progress in mathematics.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. The school instils in them a strong sense of responsibility. The new behaviour policy makes boundaries clear for pupils and the consequences if they do not fulfil the school's expectations. Pupils of all ages play together happily at lunchtimes, with mid-day staff organising games to keep them occupied.
- Pupils greatly enjoy school and are very proud of the increased part they play in its daily life through changes introduced by the headteacher this year. They greatly value the 'buddy' system where each pupil in Years 4 to 6 looks after a Reception child or a pupil in Years 1 and 2. Roles as prefects, house captains or school council representatives help them to learn how to take on leadership responsibilities. Pupils also have an increasingly prominent voice in the school's development such as through weekly 'tea time' discussions between a pupil in each class and the headteacher.
- Pupils are mostly highly motivated. They are very attentive in lessons and listen carefully when their classmates are answering questions. Pupils collaborate well when working on tasks together or when sharing their ideas in discussion. However, the learning of some pupils can slow when they do not live up to these high standards by losing concentration when teaching is not interesting.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. Pupils feel very safe and they feel adults care deeply for them. Safeguarding procedures are very secure, their impact is regularly reviewed and governors make sure they are implemented rigorously. Pupils learn how to spot risks and look after themselves through very effective training including in e-safety and road safety. Pupils are sharply aware of what constitutes bullying and report that incidents are very rare and dealt with swiftly when they occur.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher has identified where improvement is needed by rigorously monitoring teaching and learning and carefully analysing assessment data. This has enabled her, with senior leaders

and governors, to implement plans that are already seeing success. The headteacher's aim of devolving greater responsibility to subject leaders is underway. She is developing a strong team of senior and subject leaders by providing them with training and guidance so they can make an increasing contribution to driving improvement in their areas of responsibility.

- The headteacher has identified improving teaching as a key to meeting her ambitions for the school. To this end, she has introduced training and support programmes for each teacher based on their individual needs. This includes the opportunity to observe and work alongside teachers with high levels of expertise. Targets set for each teacher's performance are linked closely to improving the pupils' progress.
- Teachers are now being held closely to account for the progress of all pupils in their classes including those supported through additional funding. The regular checking of progress to identify where pupils might be in danger of missing their targets is enabling teachers to focus support rapidly where needed.
- The school engages appropriately with the local authority which has provided training for staff and governors to help them gain a better understanding of assessment data. The headteacher has moved quickly to establish closer links with other schools in order to share expertise.
- The curriculum focuses sharply on literacy and numeracy while adding interest through topics. Music plays a major role in the pupils' lives and the school participates in a local Hertfordshire music festival. The Easter production by pupils in Years 3 and 4 that took place during the inspection was of a high quality and was much enjoyed by parents who attended. Pupils learn about other denominations and the customs of other faiths. They discuss the moral arguments behind 'Fair Trade' and organise a charity day each term.
- New funding is being used well to enhance the already broad range of sporting opportunities and to increase staff expertise. Buying into the local sports partnership and engaging specialist coaches has widened the range of sports available for pupils and increased participation in competition against local schools.
- Parents value the way the headteacher is involving them more in school life and their children's learning. The new 'Parent Forum' gives them the chance to express their thoughts on particular items, and their views are regularly sought and acted upon where possible by governors.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors use their wide range of skills to provide effective support and challenge to school leaders. They have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and where the school's performance can be improved. Their understanding of assessment information enables governors to ask searching questions such as about what school leaders are doing to raise achievement in mathematics and increase the progress of the most able. Governors are fully aware of the quality of teaching and the action the headteacher is taking to secure improvements. They know how the system in school links a teacher's performance to pay progression. Governors manage finances prudently. They are fully involved in establishing the principles for the use of funding such as the pupil premium and checking its impact.

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	117493
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	439576

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	207
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Fiona Clark
Headteacher	Michelle Fusi
Date of previous school inspection	6 March 2009
Telephone number	01920 461678
Fax number	01920 461418
Email address	admin@sacredheart312.herts.sch.uk

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