

Sacred Heart Catholic Voluntary Academy

Beacon Road, Loughborough, LE11 2BG

Inspection dates 3–4 June 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Not enough pupils make good progress, especially in mathematics. More-able pupils do better than other pupils.
- Teaching is not consistently good across the school. Some teachers do not make sure pupils have work which builds on what they already know and helps them make the progress of which they are capable.
- Some teachers' subject knowledge, especially in mathematics, is not as good as it should be. This means that they are not always clear about what they want the children to learn.
- Leaders have not successfully addressed the fall in standards over recent years.
- Governors ask senior staff challenging questions about how they are improving the school, but have only recently put systems in place to check how well pupils are doing.
- Some governors are not clear about their role and what they should be looking at when they visit the school.

The school has the following strengths

- Children make good progress in the Reception class.
- There is some good teaching in the school, and progress has improved over recent months.
- Pupils feel safe in school and know how to stay safe in different situations.
- Pupils behave well in and around school. They are considerate to each other and are extremely polite and well-mannered.
- The interim headteacher has put new systems in place to check pupils' progress regularly and to improve the quality of teaching.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is particularly strong. The school's religious beliefs underpin all it does and encourage pupils to think about how they behave both in, and out of school.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 15 lessons or parts of lessons, four of which were seen together with the headteacher.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, other staff, two groups of pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body and two other governors and two directors of the academy trust.
- Informal discussions were also held with parents.
- The inspectors took account of the 71 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire Parent View, the school's own parental and pupil questionnaires and the 22 completed staff questionnaires.
- The inspectors observed the school's work and reviewed a range of documentation, including the school's checks on its performance, its analysis and tracking of pupils' progress, records of behaviour and safety, school improvement plans, records relating to classroom observations and the management of staff performance, safeguarding arrangements and records of meetings of the governing body.
- The inspectors also looked at pupils' work, listened to pupils read and checked information on attendance.

Inspection team

Susan Hughes, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Kerin Jones

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school. It converted to become an academy school on 1st July 2012. When its predecessor school, Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School, was last inspected by Ofsted it was judged to be good.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium, which is additional funding for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals or are looked after, is below average.
- Most pupils are white British. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is below average; the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is also below average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is below average. The proportion supported at school action plus or through a statement of special educational needs is also below average.
- The current headteacher took up post in 1st January 2014 on an interim basis, following the resignation of the previous headteacher. A permanent headteacher has been appointed to start at the school in September 2014.
- There have been five new members to the governing body since September 2013.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that more is good by ensuring that all teachers' subject knowledge, particularly in mathematics, is secure enough for them to ask questions which help pupils think deeply about their learning and make better progress.
- Improve achievement, especially in mathematics, by making sure that all groups of pupils, and particularly those with lower or average abilities, are given work which builds on what they already know and helps them make good progress.
- Strengthen leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - systems recently introduced to regularly check pupils' progress are used by all leaders to drive improvements in their subjects
 - governors have a systematic approach to check how well the school is doing and all governors understand their role.

An external review of governance should be undertaken to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- In 2013 Year 6 pupils left school with average standards in reading, writing and mathematics. Most had made expected progress since Key Stage 1, but lower-ability pupils did not make as much progress as they should in reading.
- Progress requires improvement throughout Key Stages 1 and 2. This means that pupils start with average standards and leave the school with average standards. While there are pockets of good progress in the school, for example in Year 6, this is not consistent in all classes. The progress pupils make in reading and writing is better than in mathematics.
- Standards in reading and writing are improving. The results of the most recent national screening check at the end of Year 1 on how well pupils know their phonics (the sounds that letters represent in words) were above average. During the inspection, pupils used these skills to read unfamiliar words such as 'smugglers' and 'suggested'.
- Pupils who are supported by additional funding make similar progress to other pupils. In some cases, they make better progress. In 2013, eligible Year 6 pupils were over a year behind their classmates in mathematics, almost two terms behind in reading, and half a term behind in writing. The gap between the attainment of eligible pupils currently in the school and that of other pupils is gradually closing as their rate of progress is improving. While initially the funding was used to subsidise out-of-school activities and trips, it is now spent on small group or one to one support for eligible pupils.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs also make similar progress to other pupils. Their achievement in mathematics is similarly weaker than in reading and writing. They are sensitively supported by well-briefed additional adults. Since January their progress has been checked more often to make sure the support is being effective.
- More-able pupils make good progress. Teachers make sure that work in lessons encourages them to aim for, and reach, high standards of attainment.
- Children make good progress in the Reception class. They start with skills broadly typical for their age, but their reading, writing and mathematics skills are not as strong as other skills. In 2013 the proportion of pupils who made a good level of development was above average. Pupils currently in the Reception class have skills better developed than those typical for their age.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- While some teaching is good, this is not consistent across all classes. In some classes the work does not take account of what pupils already know or the skills and knowledge they need to develop to make good progress. For example, sometimes lower-ability pupils are given work that is too easy for them, while on other occasion the work is too difficult because they have not developed the skills and understanding needed to complete the task.
- Some teachers do not have good subject knowledge, especially in mathematics. Their explanations are not clear and the questions they ask do not always check understanding thoroughly enough or help pupils move on in their learning.

- Where teachers' subject knowledge is strong they ask pupils to explain their answers and pose challenging questions which develops deeper understanding on which to build new skills. Pupils' work is checked regularly during the lesson to make sure that they make good progress. For example, in a mathematics lesson some Year 2 pupils quickly understood how to halve large numbers and moved on to quartering them. Others persevered with tasks which ensured they fully understood halving techniques.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are supported individually or in small groups. Pupils respond well to the sensitive and encouraging manner of adults who help them. In recent months this has become even more effective as staff training and support has been provided. Pupils who are eligible for additional funding are similarly supported and their progress is improving.
- The new primary sports funding is used to employ a specialist teacher and coaches. The teacher works alongside class-teachers to develop both pupils' and teachers' skills. Coaches lead lunchtime and after-school sports activities. During the inspection, Year 1 pupils enjoyed developing their gymnastic skills in a lesson led by the specialist teacher, while Key Stage 2 pupils attended football and netball coaching after school. Staff are starting to check how pupils' skills are improving and the school has been very successful when competing against other schools.
- In the Reception class, activities both indoors and outside help pupils develop their learning. There is a good balance between adult-supported activities and opportunities for children to play and explore on their own. During the inspection in a Religious Education lesson, children practised their writing skills while making cards and writing letters to their friends. On other occasions they took turns with the tricycles and worked together to sort shapes into different groups.
- Teachers build good relationships in lessons so that pupils feel confident to offer answers and share ideas. Teachers encourage mutual respect, both in their comments and the way they treat pupils, and pupils respond well to these good role models.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. They are exceptionally polite and behave well in and around school. Pupils of all ages play happily together and are courteous and respectful to adults and to each other. Older pupils look out for younger ones and pupils say they enjoy coming to school. This is reflected in their good attendance.
- Pupils readily take on roles of responsibilities. For example, during the inspection some Year 6 pupils led a lunchtime meditation session. This was attended by over 30 pupils and all responded sensitively and appropriately to the guidance of the leaders.
- Pupils have a very good understanding about what bullying is and the different forms it can take, such as cyber bullying. One boy explained, 'It's not always physical contact, it can be words'. They say there is very little bullying in the school and any incidents are always dealt with well by adults.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Leaders ensure that access to the building is secure, and staff are rigorously checked prior to appointment.

- Pupils feel safe in school and know how to stay safe in different situations. Visiting theatre groups help them learn about safety on the road and fire-fighters taught them to 'stop, drop and roll'. Pupils also understand how to stay safe when using the internet.
- Pupils have positive attitudes to school and told inspectors that their teachers always help them in lessons. Occasionally, when given the opportunity to choose their work, some pupils opt for tasks that are too easy for them, but generally pupils respond enthusiastically when teachers offer them high levels of challenge in lessons. Lessons are rarely disrupted by poor behaviour.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- When the interim headteacher started in January, she identified that teaching and achievement were not good. Systems have been put in place to track pupils' progress more frequently so that those in danger of falling behind are quickly identified and helped. The type of support given to pupils is also now checked more rigorously to make sure it is accelerating progress.
- Subject leaders are starting to use information to check progress in their areas of responsibility and have taken actions to raise achievement. However, while work in pupils' books shows that achievement has improved recently, this has not yet shown in published results. The school is trying to promote equality of opportunity to make sure that no groups of pupils achieve less well than others. The recent impact of action taken demonstrates that the school has the capacity to improve.
- The appraisal system for checking teachers' performance, introduced last year, has contributed to the improving teaching in recent months. Individual targets are used by the headteacher and the governing body to confirm that pay rises and promotion are justified by results. The headteacher has made sure that performance is reviewed regularly during the year to identify those who need help to improve.
- The subjects pupils learn are lively and interesting. Theatre trips, visitors to school and themed days help bring their learning to life. For example, following their museum trip to see an Egyptian exhibition, Year 4 pupils opened own exhibition to parents. Year 6 pupils performed poems written on their themed day, and all pupils enjoyed dressing for the Ghanaian Day.
- The school has formed strong partnerships with local schools which give teachers opportunities to share ideas. The academy trust supports the school well through helping develop leadership and teaching skills and making sure that teachers accurately assess how well pupils are doing.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education underpins all the school does. Assemblies and fund-raising events help pupils appreciate and celebrate the differences between their lives and others. Close links with the church supports strong spiritual development and pupils visit local residential homes and hospices where they sing at festival times.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors understand that the school is not doing as well as it could. They have started to check more carefully how well pupils are achieving but new systems have not yet had sufficient time to become fully embedded. In meetings governors ask senior leaders challenging questions to hold them accountable for improving the school. They have started focusing more on pupil achievement when they visit. However, some governors are not clear about what they should be looking at and how to report their findings to the rest of the governing body.

- Governors manage the school’s finances effectively and know that the additional funding is helping eligible pupils to make better progress. They understand how the new primary school sports funding is used to extend physical education opportunities. Governors appreciate how the new appraisal system is contributing to improving teaching and that they need to make sure that teachers’ pay rises are linked to the progress their pupils make.
- Governors make sure that national requirements for safeguarding and child protection are met.

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	138294
Local authority	Leicestershire
Inspection number	444114

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	207
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Frank Fay
Headteacher	Geraldine McGlynn (Acting)
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
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