

Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School

Greys Hill, Henley-on-Thames, Oxfordshire, RG9 1SL

Inspection dates 12–13 November 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Early years provision		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- Pupils' achievement in reading throughout the school has declined because there are not enough opportunities for them to practise their reading skills to develop a deeper understanding.
- The quality of teaching requires improvement. Teachers do not check the pupils' understanding often enough during the lessons to ensure that work is not too hard or too easy.
- The Early Years Foundation Stage requires improvement because some activities are not used well enough to improve the children's learning.
- Teaching assistants are not always used effectively to support pupils' learning.
- Middle leaders are not guided clearly on what is expected of them, and they do not know how to use information about pupils' progress to help them improve standards.
- Teachers do not consistently apply the school's behaviour policy, so pupils do not always concentrate when they are working on their own, or in pairs.
- Governors have reasonable knowledge of the school, but do not challenge leaders sufficiently to drive rapid improvements.
- The school development plan lacks clear measurable outcomes, so it is difficult for the governors to see if it has had any impact on improving pupils' achievement.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils feel safe, enjoy their learning and are well behaved around the school. They are polite and courteous to each other and adults.
- Senior leaders have introduced an effective system for checking pupils' achievement, which is helping progress to improve and to ensure that any underachievement is quickly tackled.
- The new headteacher has a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and has put in place strategies to improve teaching and pupils' achievement.
- The gap is narrowing between the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and their classmates.
- Parents and staff are supportive of the school and the teachers have good relationships with the pupils.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed teaching and learning in 17 lessons or part lessons. Three lessons were observed jointly with the headteacher.
- The inspection included observations of playtime and lunchtime.
- The inspectors looked at pupils' work and heard some pupils read.
- Meetings were held with pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body and one other member, and with senior staff.
- The inspectors had a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority.
- The inspectors took account of the 72 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View.
- The inspectors took account of the 20 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- The school's work was observed and a number of documents considered, including: the school's data on pupils' progress, planning and monitoring documentation, records relating to pupils' behaviour, attendance, safeguarding and the performance management of teachers.

Inspection team

John Taylor, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Gill Walley

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a smaller-than-average primary school.
- Most pupils are of White British origin, with a few from a range of other ethnic backgrounds.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is below average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is broadly average.
- The proportion known to be eligible for the pupil premium (additional funding to support children in local authority care and those known to be eligible for free school meals) is below average.
- The Early Years Foundation Stage consists of one Reception class.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school works in partnership with other local schools to share expertise and to help each other improve teaching and leadership.
- There is a privately run early years provision on site. This was not part of this inspection.
- There have been a number of changes to leadership in recent years. The current headteacher was appointed from the start of this term, September 2014.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so it is good or better by:
 - raising teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve, especially those who are more able
 - ensuring that leaders check pupils' understanding during lessons to make sure that the work set for them is neither too hard nor too easy
 - using teaching assistants effectively to support pupils' learning at all times
 - ensuring that activities in the Reception class are always used effectively to improve children's learning.
- Improve achievement in reading in Years 2 to 6 by providing more opportunities for pupils to practise their reading skills and develop their understanding more deeply.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that governors challenge school leaders to improve the quality of teaching and pupils' achievements, especially in reading
 - giving middle leaders clear guidance and training so they can drive improvements in their subjects
 - ensuring that the school's plans for improvement have clearly measurable targets so that leaders and governors can be clear about the impact of its work on pupils' achievement.
- Improve the attitudes to learning of the pupils by ensuring all teachers consistently apply the school's behaviour policy to ensure that they keep concentrating when working on their own or in pairs.

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

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management

require improvement

- Leadership and management are not yet good because the quality of teaching is not consistently good or better and the school's performance has declined since the previous inspection. The school's improvement has been hindered by the disruptions to leadership in recent years.
- However, the school is now improving under the leadership of the new headteacher. Teaching, although not yet good, is improving and pupils are making faster progress.
- Teachers appreciate the advice they get on improving their teaching and, as a result, the quality of teaching is getting better. However, this advice is not always focused on telling them what they need to do to make sure all pupils learn as fast as they can.
- The headteacher and school leaders are well aware of the school's key strengths and weaknesses. The school development plan focuses on the correct priorities, but does not yet have clearly measurable outcomes so governors can judge if the actions have been effective. The new headteacher is addressing this issue.
- Recently appointed subject leaders are keen to bring about improvements, but they have not been trained on how to interpret information about pupils' progress. The headteacher is beginning to provide clear guidance on how they can bring about the improvements.
- Pupils enjoy a wide-ranging curriculum that often inspires their interests. However, it is not yet leading to good achievement in the basic skills and providing enough opportunities for the pupils to practise their reading skills and deepen their understanding.
- The curriculum is enhanced by a good variety of clubs, visits and trips including a trip in the previous week to Devon by Year 6. Good use was made of this trip to motivate the pupils and improve their skills and knowledge in different topics.
- The spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects of learning provide pupils with a range of experiences of different faiths and cultures. This prepares the pupils well for life in modern Britain and is clearly seen in the respect they show for each other.
- The school places high importance on tackling discrimination and the promotion of equality of opportunity, although it has not yet resulted in all groups of pupils achieving well. Pupils' progress is checked at regular meetings. If any pupil is seen to underperform extra help is arranged to help them catch up, and their progress is frequently monitored. This has resulted in the gap narrowing between disadvantaged pupils and their classmates.
- The primary school sports funding is used to train members of staff and provides opportunities for pupils to take part in a wide range of sporting activities. The school offers a wide range of sporting activities and the staff are more confident at teaching different games. The school has not yet measured the impact of this funding.
- The local authority provided appropriate 'light touch' support because of the school's previous good performance. This has now increased to help the school regain this level.
- The school has worked effectively with a partnership of local schools to develop its leadership and curriculum.
- There is a system of performance management for teachers. The school has shown how this is linked to the progress pupils make but it has not yet been effective in securing good progress for pupils. Neither is it linked to appropriate training.
- Parents and staff are positive about how well the school is managed.
- Safeguarding meets statutory requirements.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governors know the school's strengths and need for development. They understand the information about the pupils' progress and check the achievement of disadvantaged and vulnerable pupils. They are aware of the impact of the pupil premium funding. Governors know how the sports funding is spent but are unsure of its impact on the pupils. They think the quality of teaching is better than it is. They are aware that teachers' performance is linked to pay and that good teaching should be rewarded and underperformance tackled. Governors are aware of their own strengths and areas that need developing, and are receiving training. They rigorously and frequently check the school's finances. They do not provide sufficient challenge to the school to drive the rapid improvements that they know are required.

The behaviour and safety of pupils**require improvement****Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. In some classes the pupils say that at times it is difficult to concentrate on their work, due to other pupils' behaviour, and this hinders their progress. Some work is not neat which shows that some pupils do take pride in their work.
- The school's behaviour policy is not consistently used. The parts of the policy that say how the school deals with minor misbehaviour, and low-level disruption, are not understood by the pupils. However, pupils do appreciate and value the rewards and recognition they get for good work and behaviour.
- The pupils are polite and courteous. They know how to talk appropriately to adults. Behaviour around the school, at breaks and lunchtimes is mostly calm. Some of the Year 6 pupils are 'buddies' and help look after the younger pupils at lunchtimes.
- Pupils say they enjoy their lessons and enjoy learning. There is a school council, made up of a representative from each class; pupils say it helped choose what equipment was built in the playground for them to use at breaks and lunchtimes.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils, staff and all those parents who completed the questionnaire agree.
- Pupils know about the different forms of bullying. They say that on the very rare occasions that bullying occurs it is effectively dealt with by the school. School records support this.
- Attendance at the school continues to be well above the national average.

The quality of teaching**requires improvement**

- Teaching requires improvement because, while improving, it is not consistently good throughout the school. Pupils are sometimes given work that is too easy or too hard for them. This slows down their learning and causes them to become distracted.
- Teachers do not ask questions often enough to check pupils' understanding and then, if needed, change the lesson to make sure pupils do not fall behind.
- Marking is regular and tells the pupils what they have done well. It tells them how they can improve their work. Most pupils respond to the teachers' comments, which helps them to make progress.
- Most pupils concentrate on their work in the lessons because the teachers make the lessons interesting. The pupils listen when the teachers are explaining what to do and pupils are eager to ask questions and offer their ideas. Teaching assistants are not always used effectively during the start of a lesson, when leading groups, or supporting the whole class. They can give too much support by answering questions or prompting pupils too quickly, or not correcting mistakes, which slows learning.
- Teachers do not always show they have high expectations of the pupils, and do not always provide enough challenge for the more able pupils, so they do not learn as quickly as they could.
- The teaching of phonics (the sounds letters make) is effective as indicated in the Year 1 phonic screening check. However, the teaching of reading is less effective as pupils move through the school because there is not enough emphasis on pupils deepening their understanding in a range of subjects.
- A check on pupils' work in books shows that progress in writing and mathematics is not consistent. In Year 6, where the teacher's comments are acted upon by the pupils, progress is good. In some other years, where the work is not so neat and pupils do not so regularly respond to the comments, progress is not as fast.
- Pupils enjoy their lessons, and are often eager to learn and contribute to the lessons. Teachers have good relationships with the pupils.
- A large majority of parents who filled in the questionnaire think the children are well taught.

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- The achievement of pupils requires improvement because their progress in reading is not fast. They are not given enough opportunities to practise their skills at getting information from pieces of writing to deepen their understanding. Information from the school, however, shows that the progress in reading is now starting to improve.
- In the Reception class children enter with levels of development which are typically well above what is expected for their age. Their progress is not rapid because information about their development is not used well enough to help inform the planning.
- For the past three years the vast majority of pupils at the end of Year 1 have reached expected levels in the national check on phonics (the sounds letters make), but after this progress in reading slows down as the pupils do not have enough practise at getting information out of pieces of writing.
- Over the last three years the attainment of Key Stage 1 pupils has declined, but it remains above average. Their progress, however, has not been fast enough, especially in reading and mathematics. Current school information indicates that progress is now improving in Key Stage 1.
- In Key Stage 2 inconsistent teaching has resulted in not enough pupils making good progress, especially in reading. Last year girls made better progress than boys, but in previous years this has not been the case.
- More able pupils are making similar progress to other pupils in writing and mathematics, but they have not achieved their full potential in reading because they have not had work that is hard enough.
- Preliminary national test results, at the end of Year 6 in 2014, show that the gap between disadvantaged pupils and non-disadvantaged pupils is about four months in reading, about 12 months in writing and six months in mathematics. There are similar gaps with the national picture. Current school information shows that the school's work to support disadvantaged pupils is effective and any differences in attainment are being reduced.
- Pupils who are disabled or with special educational needs make the same similar steady progress as other pupils. There is evidence that their progress is starting to improve under the guidance of the coordinator.
- Pupils new to learning English progress at a similar rate to other pupils. Pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds are also supported well and so progress at a rate similar to other pupils.

The early years provision

requires improvement

- The early years provision requires improvement because the children do not make good progress in the Reception class.
- The school makes an accurate assessment of the levels of development as the children start Reception. It is clear that these are typically above what is expected for their age. Children do not make as fast progress as they could because the information about their individual levels is not well used in planning activities.
- The school recognises the pace of progress the children have made in reading, writing and number is below that in other areas. The actions it has taken to improve progress in these areas have yet to be shown to be effective.
- Parents are helped in supporting their children learn phonics (the sound letters make); computer programs are made available to them. Phonics teaching in the class does not always take into account the different stages the children are at and this limits their progress.
- Children feel safe and are well behaved and have a good attitude to learning.
- Adults do not always guide the children's learning when they have chosen their own activities. Opportunities for children to develop their writing are not frequent enough.
- Safeguarding is good and the staff training is up to date.

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	123204
Local authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	444179

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	199
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Morag Stewart
Headteacher	Gerald Davis
Date of previous school inspection	12–13 January 2010
Telephone number	01491 572796
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