

Sacred Heart Catholic School

Earlsbury Gardens, Birchfield, Birmingham, B20 3AE

Inspection dates 23–24 April 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
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

- Leaders, including governors, have not ensured that pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching are consistently good.
- The school's plans for improvement do not have clear actions or milestones for governors to use to check the impact leaders' actions are having on pupils' achievement.
- Teaching has not been strong enough in the past to ensure that all pupils make good progress in all subjects as they move through the school.
- Children in the early years do not consistently make good progress in all areas of learning. The outside learning activities and resources urgently require improvement.
- Teachers do not take pupils' use of grammar, punctuation and spelling, and whether their writing makes sense, sufficiently into account when assessing their work.
- Teachers do not routinely expect pupils to produce their best work in subjects such as history, geography or science.
- Pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to practise their writing or mathematical skills in different subjects in order to make faster progress.
- The marking of pupils' work is not consistently effective in helping them to improve it.
- Leaders' observations of teaching are not sufficiently focused on how well pupils learn. Not all leaders, including subject leaders, give teachers specific guidance on how learning could be improved.
- Governors do not question sharply enough why achievement is better in some subjects than in others.
- The school website does not include all of the information it should.

The school has the following strengths

- Although it not yet good, pupils' progress is improving.
- Reading standards are rising because of good teaching of phonics (letters and sounds). Leaders are increasingly successful in their efforts to promote a love of books throughout the school.
- Pupils are polite and courteous, showing consideration and respect for others. Their behaviour is good and they are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- Pupils enjoy school and are kept safe at all times. Attendance is well above the national average.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 10 sessions of teaching and learning, including two seen jointly with the headteacher.
- Discussions were held with school staff, four governors and two representatives from the St Mary’s C of E Infant and Nursery Academy Handsworth Teaching School Alliance.
- The inspectors talked to pupils about the school’s work and listened to some pupils read.
- Inspectors observed various aspects of the school’s work and considered a range of policies and documents. These included information about pupils’ attainment and progress, planning and monitoring documentation, notes of governors’ Taskforce meetings, the school improvement plan and self-evaluation summary, safeguarding policies, and behaviour and attendance records.
- There were insufficient responses to Ofsted’s online questionnaire, Parent View, to view the results. However, the inspectors took account of the school’s own parental questionnaires, comments made by parents at the start of the school day and the 34 responses to a staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Lois Furness, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Sara Longmire	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Sacred Heart Catholic School is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- Twenty six per cent of pupils are of Black Caribbean origin and thirty four per cent are of Black African origin. The remaining pupils coming from a wide range of different ethnic groups. Approximately half of the pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported by the pupil premium, which is additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those in local authority care, is well above average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is below average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum requirements for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- The governing body manages a before- and after-school club on site.
- A full-time Reception class caters for children in the early years.
- From September 2014, the local authority has commissioned support for the school through the St Mary's C of E Primary and Nursery Academy Handsworth Teaching School Alliance.
- Two teachers new to teaching joined the staff in September 2014.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching and achievement, especially in writing and mathematics, by ensuring that teachers:
 - help pupils to improving their grammar, punctuation and spelling skills and encourage pupils to make sure that their writing makes sense
 - take these qualities into account when assessing pupils' work
 - insist pupils produce their best work in all subjects
 - accelerate the progress of children in the early years
 - provide regular opportunities for pupils to practise their writing and mathematical skills in other subjects
 - Show pupils through marking how to improve the standard of their work.
- Strengthen leadership by ensuring that:
 - school improvement plans include clear actions and milestones that governors can use to check on the impact of leaders' work on improving teaching and achievement
 - all leaders, including all subject leaders, focus lesson observations on the impact teaching has on pupils' learning and guide teachers on how this can be improved in their feedback
 - governors track systematically how well the school is performing compared to other schools nationally and use this information to effectively challenge leaders
 - the outdoor provision in the early years, including resources, is improved as a matter of urgency
 - The school website includes all the required information, especially the achievement of disadvantaged pupils.

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

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management

requires improvement

- Leaders' view of the school's performance is overgenerous and does not accurately reflect the quality of education provided for its pupils. Since the last inspection, pupils' progress, including in the early years, has not been consistently good in all subjects.
- The school improvement plan is a very detailed and lengthy document. Although some actions are precise, many are vague and this prevents leaders checking easily if they are on track. There are few milestones or timescales included in the improvement plan. This makes it difficult for leaders, including governors, to monitor progress effectively at regular intervals and to make sure that actions are having an impact quickly enough.
- Leaders' observations of lessons do not focus sufficiently on the impact of teaching on pupils' learning. In their feedback to teachers, they offer too little guidance about how pupils' progress could be better. As a result, despite the links made between the objectives set for staff and the national Teachers' Standards, teaching has not improved as rapidly as it should have done.
- Monitoring of pupils' work is more effective in English and mathematics, where leaders have identified strengths and areas requiring improvement and have shared this information with staff. However, leaders of subjects such as science, history and geography do not check that work is good enough.
- Leaders have brought about some improvements since the school was last inspected. Behaviour is consistently good. Teaching has been improved in reading and pupils currently in the school are making faster progress in this subject. Standards at the end of Year 6 are rising and are now average overall. However, these improvements have not been sufficient to ensure that achievement is good in all subjects. For example, standards in mathematics were still below average in 2014 and pupils made much less progress in this subject than in reading or writing.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral social and cultural development is promoted well. Pupils are quiet and respectful during acts of collective worship. They respond thoughtfully to questions about how to behave and regularly consider issues such as tolerance, respect, peace and friendship in the themes they study each term. As a result, they are well prepared for life in modern Britain. Discrimination of any kind is not tolerated.
- The additional funding received through the pupil premium is used effectively to provide additional staffing and resources to support the pupils for whom it is intended. All staff is committed to ensuring that these pupils enjoy the same opportunity to succeed as the others. As a result, disadvantaged pupils are making better progress and catching up with their classmates.
- The school makes appropriate use of the primary school physical education and sport funding to enhance the skills of teachers and to broaden the range of sporting activities available. These include basketball, football, athletics and cricket. This is leading to an increase in pupils' participation in sport and is helping them to develop a healthy lifestyle.
- Leaders' work to ensure pupils attend the school, behave well and are safe is good. As a result of the school's work with parents, pupils' attendance is well above average. Safeguarding procedures are implemented well and meet requirements. Parents have positive opinions of the school's work in looking after their children.
- The support from the local authority is appropriate. Members of the Handsworth Teaching School Alliance are working closely with the school and have accurately identified areas requiring further improvement, such as the outdoor provision in the early years. The school works closely with other schools in the area to identify good practice that is relevant to its own needs. These partnerships are helping to improve teaching and pupils' achievement.

■ The governance of the school:

- Governance has improved since the last inspection but it still requires further improvement. A small group of governors, known as the Taskforce, meet regularly, visit classrooms and speak to pupils. They know there is a range of data available for them to peruse, such as that on Ofsted's Data Dashboard'. However, they do not always use such data effectively to hold leaders to account for the school's performance compared to other schools nationally, and although they know in general how teaching performance is managed, their view of the quality of teaching is too positive.
- Governors monitor the spending of additional funding. They know how the money is used, and the impact it has on eligible pupils' achievement and well-being.
- Governors meet their statutory duties regarding the safeguarding of pupils. They are alert to the possible impact of wider safeguarding issues such as extremism, and the need to prepare pupils for life in modern Britain. However, they have not made sure that all of the information required by law is displayed on the school website. Information relating to pupils' achievement, including that of disadvantaged pupils, is not available.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Leaders have been successful in creating a calm, well-ordered and friendly environment in which pupils can learn and play. Pupils behave in a sensible and considerate way around the school. They are polite and show good manners. Playtimes are busy social times where pupils get along together well. In lessons, pupils listen carefully to instructions and are keen to learn.
- Pupils say that behaviour is good. Teachers make sure that pupils understand what the school expects from the moment they start in the early years, where children quickly develop good attitudes towards school. Pupils have a clear understanding of the school's systems of rewards and sanctions, and the effect these have on maintaining good order. They say that although there are a few rare incidents of weaker behaviour, these are managed fairly and consistently by all staff.
- Pupils are keen to take responsibility and the Reading Champions, for example, are proud of their work in improving pupils' reading skills. One champion said it is her job to make sure that pupils choose books that are not too easy. Another said, 'My role is to inspire others in wanting to read.'
- Staff who responded to the inspection questionnaire says they believe behaviour is good and that it is effectively managed within school. Almost all parents who responded to the school questionnaire agree that leaders make sure that pupils behave well, and that bullying is dealt with effectively.
- The school maintains records of any behavioural incidents well. A very small number of pupils have been excluded. Leaders ensure that the action taken is consistently and successfully managed within the framework of the school's behaviour policy. Information is clearly documented and accurately reported to the relevant authorities.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Relevant risk assessments ensure that the school site is safe, and trips and visits are conducted safely. Staffs receive regular and relevant training for all aspects of safeguarding. Any staffs who are new to the school receive appropriate training.
- Pupils say that they feel safe and know who to go to if they have any concerns. They are confident that any staff member would help them to resolve any issues or worries. They have a good awareness of how to keep safe, for example when using the internet.
- Relationships between pupils and staff are supportive and respectful. Pupils understand what bullying is and say that while incidents of bullying are rare, staff deal with them consistently and fairly. They say that name-calling and discrimination are not tolerated and pupils from different backgrounds get on very well together. New pupils are welcomed warmly into the school community.
- Pupils' enjoyment of school and sense of security are reflected in their well-above average attendance.

They are punctual and quickly respond to the bell at the end of breaks, so no time is wasted. Parents are supportive. One commented, 'I do not worry about leaving my child here, this school is like a home.'

- The before- and after-school clubs are well attended and provide a safe and secure environment for pupils.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching varies in quality from subject to subject and across classes. Staff expectations of the quality and quantity of work in writing and mathematics are not as evident in subjects such as history, geography and science. Also, these subjects are not used well enough for pupils to practise their writing skills.
- The teaching of writing is not effective and pupils' attainment levels are not always assessed accurately. For example, the most-able pupils demonstrate the skill of using adverbial phrases correctly and use interesting vocabulary to engage interest, but their use of simple grammar, punctuation and spelling is frequently incorrect. Teachers do not correct simple errors consistently. Neither do pupils check that their written work makes sense.
- In mathematics, teachers do not ensure that pupils have sufficient opportunities to apply their mathematical knowledge in different contexts. Some activities do not build on what pupils have previously learned; sometimes, pupils repeat work that they can already do.
- Teachers do not mark pupils' work well enough. Teachers often give pupils advice about how to improve in their written feedback, but they do not check that pupils have acted on this advice to ensure that the same errors are not repeated.
- Reading was identified in the last inspection as a priority for improvement and the teaching of reading is now good. Younger pupils develop a secure understanding of how to sound out letters and older pupils read fluently. The teaching of reading is systematic throughout the school and pupils are developing a good understanding of a range of texts. Pupils spoken to during the inspection said they enjoyed reading and most read regularly at home.
- There is some common strength in teaching. Teachers have good expectations of behaviour and they command respect from pupils. Pupils enjoy their lessons and want to do well for their teachers. Teaching assistants make a good contribution to pupils' learning. They are usually briefed well and know what is expected of them.

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Although progress is improving over time, pupils are not yet making sufficient and sustained progress in all subjects across the school, and particularly in mathematics. Achievement varies too much between classes and subjects.
- In 2014, by the end of Year 6, results in writing were slightly above average. They were slightly below average in reading and below average in mathematics. Similarly, rates of progress varied. The proportion of pupils making expected and better progress exceeded the national average in writing. However, in reading and mathematics the proportions making expected and better than expected progress were below average. Currently, most pupils throughout the school are making expected progress in all three subjects but too few are making better than expected progress, especially in mathematics.
- Writing requires improvement. This is because pupils are not giving sufficient attention to the use of correct grammar, punctuation or spelling skills, or ensuring that their writing makes sense. These weaknesses are more evident in subjects such as history, geography and science. Pupils do not have enough opportunity to apply their knowledge of mathematics in other subject areas.

- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs receive appropriately targeted support from teachers and teaching assistants, both in lessons and in individual and small-group sessions. As a result, they are progressing better than in the past. Overall, their progress is similar to that of other groups of pupils.
- Pupils from different ethnic groups and those who speak English as an additional language also make similar progress to other pupils. Once pupils are confident in using English, they achieve at least as well as their classmates.
- Standards in the phonics check for Year 1 pupils in 2014 were below average, declining from average in 2013. Improved teaching of phonics means that more pupils are on track for better results this year. Almost all of the pupils who fell below the expected standard in Year 1 in 2014 are now on track to achieve it in Year 2. Reading standards in Years 3 to 6 are also improving. Current data show that more Year 6 pupils are expected to attain the expected Level 4 and higher Level 5 in the National Curriculum tests than in the past.
- At the end of Year 2 in 2014, attainment was average in reading, writing and mathematics. This showed good improvement from the previous year, when it was well below average in reading and mathematics.
- The achievement of the most-able pupils is improving. The school is ensuring that these pupils are given work that is helping them to make faster progress. Assessment information shows that more pupils are now doing harder work in all year groups.
- The attainment of disadvantaged pupils in Year 6 in 2014 was similar to that of their classmates in writing and mathematics, but two terms behind in reading. In comparison to other pupils nationally, their attainment was approximately three and a half terms behind in reading and mathematics, and half a term behind in writing. However, this information shows that the gap has narrowed since the tests in 2013.
- Disadvantaged pupils made similar progress to others in the school and others nationally, in reading and writing. They did not make as much progress in mathematics. In the current Year 6, disadvantaged pupils are making similar improving progress to others in the school, and the gaps are continuing to narrow.

The early years provision

requires improvement

- Children join the Reception class with skills and knowledge that are below those typical for their age, especially in language and communication. In 2014, children were inadequately prepared for the Key Stage 1 curriculum as very few entered Year 1 with a good level of development. This showed a marked decline compared with previous years. However, the work children are doing now shows that a higher proportion is on track to reach a good level of development in 2015.
- The staffs are very caring and establish warm and friendly relationships with the children. This ensures that children play well together, feel safe and gain confidence. As a result, behaviour in the early years is good. Staffs use effective systems to look after children and keep them safe and secure.
- Teaching requires improvement as activities do not consistently make sure that children make good progress in all areas of learning. At times, all children are involved in the same activity, for example counting the spots on a ladybird. During the inspection the most-able children did this easily and were capable of doing more. However, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are managed sensitively and make good progress, especially in their personal, social and emotional development.
- Leadership and management of the early years require improvement. Advice from the Handsworth Teaching School Alliance has resulted in changes to the indoor and outdoor environments. Improvements have been made in the indoor environment but the outdoor area is under-resourced and is not used effectively enough to extend children's learning. Activities are often the same as those done in the indoor classroom, for example colouring in a dinosaur picture, and do not extend children's skills.

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	103477
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	462592

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	Eileen Tams
Headteacher	Lisa Fahy
Date of previous school inspection	10 September 2013
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