

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234  
[www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)



13 December 2018

Mrs Carol Walker  
Executive Headteacher  
Sacred Heart Primary School  
Ayresome Street  
Middlesbrough  
TS1 4NP

Dear Mrs Walker

### **Short inspection of Sacred Heart Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 4 December 2018, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The visit was the first short inspection carried out since your predecessor school was judged to be good in May 2013.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

Your determined, insightful and well-focused leadership ensures that pupils receive strong personal development which enables them to make good academic progress. Along with your head of school, you have an accurate view of the strengths and priorities for improvement to ensure the further development of the school. This is evident in the school's self-evaluation and key priorities for improvement documents. Your leadership team and governors share your aims and are clear in how they will improve pupils' outcomes in their areas of responsibility. In September 2018, your school joined Nicholas Postgate Catholic Academy Trust (NPCAT). The trust has worked promptly with you and members of the local governing body to review the school's pupils' outcomes and begin to plan where the trust's support can help strengthen your ambition for improvement. Consequently, the leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

The strengths in pupils' behaviour found at the inspection of your predecessor school have been maintained. Many pupils arrive at your school at different times in the school year. Sometimes these pupils are new to English or have little experience of school life. Leaders and staff have created a friendly, caring and nurturing learning environment. As a result, all pupils, whatever their backgrounds, settle quickly into school. Pupils told me that the things that they liked about your school were that there were children from lots of places, but all get on well. They also felt that teachers and staff were kind and helpful. Pupils move around school in an orderly fashion. In lessons they participate attentively in learning and cooperate well with their peers. Their behaviour at playtimes is good and they engage well in the range of active and social activities available.

The areas for improvement identified at the inspection of your predecessor school have been addressed or are moving in the right direction. Work on the first area, to accelerate the learning of the most able pupils in every class, is having an impact in some subjects, although this has been variable over time. In 2018, key stage 2 pupils' progress in reading improved substantially. This had a positive impact on pupils' attainment, including that of the most able. Similarly, the gains made in the numbers of pupils reaching greater depth in reading, writing and mathematics over the last three years have generally shown that most-able pupils are doing better. However, you recognise that there is still work to do to embed the improvements in reading and to enable more pupils to reach the higher standards in mathematics and particularly writing.

The second area to address was that leaders and managers should do even more to help parents to be involved more fully with their children's learning. You have a range of strategies to address this. Your pastoral lead works very effectively to support families of vulnerable pupils. You have appointed a leader for parental engagement to ensure that this aspect has a high profile in school. You have a variety of meetings and opportunities to help parents understand how to support their children's learning at home. You encourage parents to share their views of the school when they attend meetings about their children's progress. Your most recent survey analysis, in October 2018, shows that parents have high levels of satisfaction with all aspects of the school. You go the extra mile to ensure that you communicate effectively with parents who speak English as an additional language.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Leaders, staff and governors give the highest priority to keeping pupils safe and there is a strong culture of safeguarding across the school. The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Leaders complete careful safeguarding checks for all staff, governors and volunteers. Staff receive regular and appropriate training, so they know the school's procedures and how to keep pupils safe. Documentation is well maintained, and the school's online records enable effective organisation and analysis of safeguarding information. The pastoral lead and head of school have a thorough understanding of the needs of vulnerable pupils and their families. They work with a determined approach with other agencies to secure support for pupils where needed. Your analysis of responses to the school's recent parents' survey show that parents believe their children feel safe at your school.

### **Inspection findings**

- You review the quality of teaching regularly to ensure that it is consistently good. Where teachers are new to the school or new to an age range you ensure that there is support provided where this is required. You astutely draw on the expertise within school, or from other sources, including your other school where you are the executive headteacher. For example, the assistant headteacher has worked alongside staff to coach and develop teaching skills to good effect. A

further example was the innovative additional teaching support provided for a group of Year 6 pupils in 2018. This work engaged them well with their learning and had a positive effect on boys' progress in reading, writing and mathematics.

- Leaders and staff focus on developing children's interest in reading from starting school. During my visit to 'story time' in the early years, children were settled and engaged well as staff shared traditional tales. Staff motivated children to join in with actions and repetition of lines from the story, developing children's vocabulary and interest in reading from an early age. The early years classrooms have a range of opportunities for children to develop their phonics skills.
- Phonics is taught through a well-structured approach across the school. Staff receive regular training to keep their skills up to date and to ensure that all staff use a consistent approach. Since the introduction of this more structured method, pupils' phonics knowledge has improved and the school's results in the Year 1 phonics screening check have generally been close to the national averages. In 2018, there was a dip in the school's results. Leaders' analysis shows that this was linked to changes to the cohort and some pupils who were new to English or had specific barriers to learning.
- In 2017, key stage 2 pupils' outcomes in reading were not strong enough. You and your staff have already been working on improving this aspect and your strategies have begun to bear fruit. In lessons, teachers use quality texts to enrich pupils' vocabulary and deepen their comprehension. The profile of reading has been raised. The school has an attractive library area. In classrooms, teachers have created inviting reading areas, often linked to the curriculum theme, such as the Second World War, to draw pupils into the world of books. The introduction of frequent reading followed by online assessments motivates pupils to read regularly with interest and understanding. This work had a positive effect on pupils' outcomes at the end of key stage 2 in 2018 and is evident in current pupils' work. Leaders recognise the need to embed this work to ensure that these gains are maintained.
- Leaders, staff, governors and trustees have a good understanding of the community the school serves. Contextually, the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language or who are new to English is well above that found in schools nationally. Similarly, the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is also in the highest 20%. Levels of mobility are high, and many pupils can arrive or leave during any school term. Leaders have a range of approaches which help to promptly assess pupils' needs and to match the teaching and support to help them to settle quickly and to thrive.
- The assistant headteacher provides strong leadership for mathematics. The frequent teaching of number and mental mathematics work ensures that pupils are secure in their mathematical knowledge. The assistant headteacher has recently focused on developing the teaching of reasoning in mathematics. This is becoming more evident in the work in pupils' books and there has also been a slight improvement in key stage 2 pupils' progress in 2018. The assistant headteacher checks the quality of teaching in mathematics thoroughly. Consequently, she can identify the next steps to further improve pupils' outcomes in this subject. These largely centre around the embedding of the teaching of

reasoning in mathematics.

- The subject leader for English is new to the role. She worked alongside the previous subject leader to implement improvements in the teaching of reading and is now focused on improving pupils' writing. Already, staff have received training to help them teach this more effectively. The new approach aims to improve pupils' vocabulary choices and develop their writing sequencing and structure. It is too early to determine the impact of this development as it is still in the early stages of implementation.
- A high proportion of children start in the early years with skills and abilities that are often below those typical for their age, particularly in personal, social, emotional development and communication skills. Staff have planned the early years provision to meet children's needs well and to ensure continuity in learning development across Nursery and Reception classes. As a result, children make good progress from their starting points. However, leaders are rightly ambitious to increase the proportion of children who achieve a good level of development so that more are ready to start Year 1. The leader for early years is new to the role. She is an experienced early years teacher and has already begun to identify the areas for improvement. However, her role in formally checking the effectiveness of the provision across early years has not started.
- Leaders and staff present a determined and supportive approach to ensuring that pupils have high attendance levels. The independent educational welfare officer, pastoral lead and head of school review attendance levels rigorously. They support and challenge families where pupils' attendance levels are low. The importance of good attendance is evident around the school. For example, each class has a display of weekly attendance rates. Pupils enjoy school and most understand the importance of good attendance and punctuality. As a result, overall attendance levels have improved and are close to the national average. However, there remains a small group of pupils who miss too much school. You have in place further actions, including enhanced communication with parents, to reduce persistent absence.
- Leaders have established well-structured behaviour systems which pupils understand and respond to positively. Staff use these consistently across the school. Exclusions are used rarely and pupils who have been excluded receive appropriate support to help them meet success on their return to school.
- The NPCAT has already begun to challenge and support the school. The trust's recent standards review of the school has already identified where the school needs additional support and where its strengths could be shared with other schools in the trust.
- Members of the local governing board are clear where their responsibilities lie in the scheme of delegation established in the new trust arrangements. They have a thorough understanding of the school's strengths and priorities. They are vigilant in their safeguarding role.

## **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the proportions of pupils achieving the higher standards in reading, writing and mathematics increase further through embedding the improvements to teaching of reading and mathematics, and implementing the recent training to improve the teaching of writing
- outcomes for children in early years improve so that the proportion who achieve a good level of development increases towards the national average
- they continue to focus on reducing persistent absence and working with families where attendance levels or punctuality remains an issue
- they make effective use of the range of available support from the recently joined NPCAT, including leadership development for leaders new to their roles.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, chair of the board of trustees, the chief executive officer (CEO) of the multi-academy trust, the director of education for the Diocese of Middlesbrough, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Middlesbrough. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Michael Reeves  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During this one-day inspection, I discussed the work of the school with you, your head of school, assistant headteacher, subject leader for English, leader for early years and the pastoral leader. I observed and spoke with pupils during playtime and at other times during the day. I held a meeting with five representatives from the NPCAT, including the CEO. My discussions with three members of the local governing body, including the chair of the governing body, provided me with additional information. I considered school documentation, assessment information, policies and information posted on the school website. I considered the school's three surveys of the views of pupils, parents and staff. Along with the head of school, I visited eight classes to observe teaching and learning. I listened to pupils read within lessons and individually. I considered information relating to safeguarding, attendance, behaviour and bullying.