

Inspection of a good school: Sacred Heart Catholic Voluntary Academy

Beacon Road, Loughborough, Leicestershire LE11 2BG

Inspection dates:

3–4 March 2020

Outcome

Sacred Heart Catholic Voluntary Academy continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy school. They are fascinated by the topics they study. They relish the challenging work their teachers provide. Pupils achieve well, particularly in reading and writing. Leaders are ambitious for pupils. They inspire pupils to appreciate the work of great artists and composers. Pupils learn about different faiths and cultures from visitors and in special assemblies. During a recent 'careers day', representatives of over 30 professions visited school and spoke with pupils.

Pupils' personal development is of great importance to everyone. Leaders are proud of the school's enhanced mental health and well-being award. Pupils learn how to show respect to others and how to resolve disagreements. Some pupils are 'peer mediators'. They promote the school's 12 'character muscles' at playtimes. Pupils are keen to show that they are resilient and independent. Leaders are instilling a culture of responsibility. Pupils care deeply for others. When the local food bank closed, the pupils' 'school parliament' responded swiftly by setting up their own. Pupils are proud to have made their first donations.

Pupils behave well and feel safe at school. They understand about different forms of bullying and say that it rarely happens in school.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Reading is at the heart of the school's curriculum. Pupils look forward to the headteacher's weekly storytelling assembly. They add actions to the stories and are inspired to write about them. Pupils also enjoy the exciting stories that other staff read to them. Leaders have introduced a new curriculum for teaching phonics. Staff have had training. Leaders have checked that this is beginning to make a difference. Younger pupils read regularly. However, the sounds in their books do not always match the sounds and tricky words that they have been learning. Pupils who fall behind are helped to catch up quickly. Older pupils become fluent and expressive readers.

Pupils do well in mathematics, but leaders are ambitious for them to do even better. The subject leader ensures that there is a sequenced curriculum in place that helps pupils to become fluent in number and arithmetic. Teachers have secure subject knowledge and ensure that pupils thoroughly understand concepts. In Year 2, for example, pupils can explain the links between addition and subtraction. Teachers help pupils to see the purpose of mathematics by linking it to real-life situations. Pupils enjoy the challenging activities and are appropriately supported if they find anything difficult.

Leaders have begun to improve the wider curriculum. Pupils use their growing geographical skills when studying the history of significant places. For example, older pupils have researched Corunna in Spain. They know that this was the origin of the journey of the Spanish Armada. They have plotted its course on a world map. Pupils' map skills are developing well and they have a strong knowledge of where different places are located. Older pupils can use the six-figure grid references on ordnance survey maps. Younger pupils know the names and locations of the continents. The curriculum is ambitious but the order in which some parts of the curriculum will be taught is not clearly set out. Pupils do not understand some key concepts, such as human and physical geography, as well as they should. Pupils behave well in lessons and focus on their work.

Teachers adapt work for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Staff work together to write detailed individual plans to ensure that these pupils' needs are met. A small number of pupils with SEND can find it difficult to control their emotions. They receive effective support.

Children get off to a flying start in the early years. All aspects of their learning are inspired by books. Children start learning phonics straight away. They have many opportunities to be active in the exciting outdoor area. They cooperate well with each other. Children listen carefully to the teacher. They become fluent in counting and understand about 'one less'. They become confident writers. They are well prepared for Year 1.

There are many wider opportunities for pupils. Pupils appreciate the interesting visits that staff plan for them. Most pupils attend the variety of clubs. Pupils enjoy playing sports and regularly take part in competitions. All older pupils learn how to play a musical instrument and perform in an annual concert. Leaders make sure that disadvantaged pupils can join in with everything.

Staff appreciate the measures that leaders have taken to help them to manage their workload.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that staff are well trained in safeguarding. Staff know pupils well. They follow clear procedures to keep pupils safe. They know how to spot the early signs that pupils may be at risk and how to act on any concerns. This helps leaders to support vulnerable pupils and their families.

All the necessary checks are made when new staff join the school. Governors regularly check that leaders fulfil their safeguarding responsibilities.

The curriculum includes lessons in staying safe online and fire safety. Older pupils are taught how to make safe decisions in a wide range of different situations.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The curriculum is not carefully enough sequenced in some subjects. The order in which the important knowledge, skills and concepts are to be taught is not always clear to teachers when they are planning the topics. As a result, pupils do not build on their understanding as well as they could do. Leaders should ensure the curriculum enables pupils to build on what they have learned in all components of the subjects effectively.
- The books that younger pupils are given to read do not always match the sounds and the tricky words that they have learned. The books do not fully align with the sequence and expectations of the new phonics programme. As a result, pupils do not have a chance to practise the sounds and the tricky words that they know when they are reading. Leaders need to ensure that the books pupils are given to read are appropriately matched to their stage of phonics.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good or non-exempt outstanding school. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that a good school could now be better than good, or that standards may be declining, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will convert the section 8 inspection to a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good on 18–19 May 2016.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use Ofsted Parent View information when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	138294
Local authority	Leicestershire
Inspection number	10121282
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	205
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of governing body	Bernard Monaghan
Headteacher	Lisa Atkins
Website	http://sacredheartacademy.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	18–19 May 2016, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of St Thomas Aquinas Catholic Multi-Academy Trust.

Information about this inspection

- I met with the headteacher, the two assistant headteachers and a range of other leaders. I met with the chief executive officer and a director of the trust. I also met the chair and vice chair of the local governing body.
- I did deep dives in the following subjects: reading, mathematics and geography. This involved speaking with leaders and teachers, visiting lessons, speaking with pupils and looking at samples of their work.
- I observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around school. I spoke with pupils about their understanding of bullying.
- I considered a range of documents relating to safeguarding. I spoke with leaders, staff and pupils about safeguarding arrangements.

Inspection team

Claire Stylianides, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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