

Inspection of an outstanding school: Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School

Byermoor, Burnopfield, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Tyne and Wear NE16 6NU

Inspection dates:

6 and 7 October 2021

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of outstanding as a result of this initial section 8 inspection. However, the evidence suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a full inspection were carried out now. The next inspection will therefore be a full (section 5) inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School is a friendly and welcoming place. One parent expressed the views of others when they said, 'The teachers and pupils all care about each other, and all teachers help when it is needed.' Teachers ensure that the school is calm and orderly. The pupils abide by the rules. They treat each other with kindness and respect. Pupils are also extremely polite to adults and school visitors.

Pupils feel safe and well cared for. They trust adults in the school to help them. They say that bullying is very rare. They know they can raise any concerns they may have by using the worry boxes. Pupils are definite that they do not hear any derogatory language in the playground.

Pupils show positive attitudes to learning. Classrooms buzz with activity across the day. Pupils are eager to answer questions and share their opinions. Most take great pride in their work. Displays adorn corridor walls, bringing the curriculum to life. Extra-curricular activities are beginning to resume, and more clubs are planned to restart after half-term. The programme of residential visits is back in the school calendar.

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

The school's curriculum has many strengths. Subject curricula are rich in knowledge and cover the broad requirements of the national curriculum. In English and mathematics, topics are taught in a carefully considered sequence. Within each topic, knowledge is broken down into small steps. Pupils capture this knowledge well in their books. Teachers have good subject knowledge. They select suitable teaching approaches that engage pupils and challenge their thinking. Teachers skilfully adapt resources for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Teaching assistants provide effective support. They help these pupils to learn the same curriculum as everyone else. During the pandemic, leaders ensured that all subjects were taught during periods when the school was not open to all pupils. Teachers use assessment well. They frequently ask probing

questions or use short quizzes to check what knowledge pupils can recall. This approach is helping pupils remember much of the knowledge they are taught.

In some subjects, such as history, geography and art, curriculum planning is less ambitious. Planning does not make clear how key ideas or concepts will be taught. This falls short of national curriculum expectations. In history, for example, important concepts such as 'causation' and 'significance' are not identified. In addition, there are few opportunities for pupils to work on more complex tasks that involve the thoughtful selection and organisation of relevant historical knowledge.

Leaders are reviewing their approach to early reading. They recognise the limitations of their current phonics programme. While it has some strengths, some of the books provided for pupils are taken from several different phonics schemes. Sometimes these books contain sounds or words that pupils have not been taught. That said, most pupils make secure progress in reading. They get off to a quick start in the Reception class. The disruptions from COVID-19 mean some pupils, particularly those in Year 1, have fallen behind. The school has increased the amount of phonics teaching to try and help pupils catch up. However, some phonics sessions do not recap the sounds pupils have covered frequently enough.

Mathematics is taught well across the school. In the Reception class, knowledge of numbers is taught clearly. Children quickly learn to recognise 'more' and 'fewer'. There are many number-based activities for children to build on this knowledge when playing. In key stage 1, teachers use correct mathematical language and well-chosen activities to develop pupils' understanding. However, teachers rely too much on worksheets for older pupils. This results in pupils getting few opportunities to set out calculations for themselves.

Pupils' behaviour is excellent. Their positive attitudes to learning a delight. They work hard and are eager to get involved in lessons. They encourage one another and work well in pairs or small groups. The culture and climate in school are very respectful and supportive.

Before the pandemic, the school had a rich programme in place to foster pupils' personal development. Some of this had to be suspended. Most enrichment activities, such as trips to museums and residential adventure activities, are now resuming. Leaders give 10% of the week to teaching religious content and personal, social, and health education. They follow the diocese scheme of learning closely. They ensure statutory topics about relationships, health and sex are carefully sequenced in an age-appropriate way.

The headteacher has the confidence of parents and the staff. He has managed staff workload thoughtfully through a challenging period. He knows the school's strengths and areas for development.

In discussion with the headteacher, the inspector agreed that the school's provision for early reading and the quality of education within some of the foundation subjects may usefully serve as a focus for the next inspection.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The headteacher has ensured that safeguarding remains the school's number one priority. Following his appointment, he checked all aspects of safeguarding policy and practice. Staff have received up-to-date training. There are clear systems for members of staff to report any issues. Leaders are quick to report concerns on to external safeguarding partners. The curriculum does much to help pupils understand risks. For example, pupils are taught about what is appropriate and what is not in their relationships. Pupils feel very safe in school. They trust adults to address any concerns they have. Staff were aware that pupils might feel anxious or worried when the school reopened. They did everything possible to create a caring and nurturing environment.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school does not have a full systematic synthetic phonics programme in place. Decodable books are drawn from several different phonics programmes. Sometimes, this results in pupils reading books with sounds or words they have not been taught. This risks undermining their confidence. In addition, some phonics teaching lacks intensity. Leaders should complete their review of how they teach early reading and make sure these weaknesses are addressed.
- In the foundation subjects, pupils learn many facts, but are less secure on essential underpinning concepts. This falls short of national curriculum expectations and restricts pupils' deeper understanding in these subjects. Leaders need to ensure that essential concepts are highlighted in curriculum plans and are taught in lessons.
- The mathematics curriculum is well developed and ambitious. However, teachers make too much use of the scheme's worksheet resources. Leaders should ensure older pupils get more opportunities to set out mathematics work for themselves.

Background

When we have judged a school to be outstanding, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains outstanding. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good or outstanding school, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, 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 deem the section 8 inspection as a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be outstanding in October 2015.

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 information from Ofsted Parent View 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	140638
Local authority	Gateshead
Inspection number	10199452
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	236
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Martin Gannon
Headteacher	Sean Woods
Website	www.sacredheartgateshead.org
Dates of previous inspection	30 September and 1 October 2015, under section 5 of the education act 2005

Information about this school

- The current headteacher took up post in the spring of 2021. A deputy headteacher has been appointed and will join the school to take up post in January 2022.
- The school joined the Bishop Wilkinson Catholic Education Trust in April 2020.
- The school does not use any alternative education providers.
- The school is Roman Catholic. The last section 48 inspection was on 14 and 15 November 2017. The next inspection should take place within the prescribed period. Section 48 inspections (or the equivalent inspection of an academy) are usually carried out every three to five years (and usually within two to three years of a new voluntary-aided school or academy or free school opening). Section 48 inspections have been suspended during the COVID-19 pandemic and will restart in September 2021. The first inspection will be within eight years of the last, rather than the usual three to five years.
- The school runs a breakfast club.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and has taken that into account in their evaluation.
- The inspector met with the headteacher, members of the local governing body and spoke to the chief executive officer of the trust on the telephone.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, the inspector met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The inspector checked the single central record and met the headteacher to discuss the school's safeguarding arrangements. The inspector also met with a group of boys and a group of girls to explore their knowledge of how to keep themselves safe.
- The inspector looked at the 55 responses to Ofsted's parents' survey, Parent View, the 16 responses to the staff's survey and the 55 responses to the pupils' survey.

Inspection team

Chris Smith, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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