

Inspection of a good school: Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School, Henley-on-Thames

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

Inspection dates:

9 and 10 November 2021

Outcome

Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School, Henley-on-Thames continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Sacred Heart Catholic Primary is a school that lives up to its mission statement of 'To Grow in Wisdom and in Grace'. Relationships among pupils and staff are respectful. Pupils say that behaviour is good and bullying is rare. They know that if they share concerns, staff will take appropriate action.

Pupils feel that staff are like extended family and that friends shield them so they never feel alone. Pupils feel happy and safe and their parents agree. As one parent said, 'The school has a great soul'.

Teachers' expectations of pupils are high. Pupils are attentive and follow teachers' instructions quickly and carefully. Pupils know that their teachers want them to achieve well and they respond with positive attitudes to their learning. They get extra help when needed. Pupils achieve highly and leave the school well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Pupils enjoy the wide range of opportunities the school offers, for example being part of a choir and taking part in a range of clubs. They are also proud of the work they do in their community, supporting the food bank and playing board games with residents at local care homes.

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

Pupils benefit from an ambitious and cohesive curriculum. Leaders have thought carefully about what they want pupils to learn. Curriculum plans make it clear what important knowledge pupils should learn and when they should learn it. Plans have depth and show enrichment opportunities and links between subjects.

Subject leaders have built assessment opportunities into their plans and pupils can recall some of their past learning. For example, in history, pupils could give reasons why the Great Fire of London spread so quickly, and different aspects of Viking lifestyle. However, this work on assessing pupils' knowledge in the foundation subjects is at an early stage and needs to be improved. Leaders need to be clear that pupils are learning more and remembering more. They need to adapt teaching where necessary.

Leaders are passionate about developing reading. Teachers regularly read a range of interesting books to pupils. The reading curriculum, including for children in the early years, is planned well. This enables pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), to become confident readers. Staff have received suitable training. As a result, they deliver the early reading curriculum well. They use a range of strategies to ensure pupils learn and can blend different sounds. Teachers regularly check how well pupils are reading. Those pupils who need more support, including pupils in key stage 2, get the help that they need to catch up quickly. Importantly, at all ages, pupils enjoy books and are becoming confident readers.

Leaders have implemented an effective mathematics curriculum that progressively builds on prior knowledge. As a Year 6 pupil said, 'Getting the basics right is like building layers and layers of a Lego tower'. This starts in the early years and builds in a logical way. Children in the Reception class develop a strong understanding of number. Across the school, pupils have many opportunities to practise and recall important mathematical knowledge, for example times tables and number bonds. They are encouraged to use resources to support their learning. This improves pupils' mathematical confidence and fluency. Pupils who need more help receive targeted support which ensures that they have a secure understanding before moving on to more complex tasks.

Leaders and staff support pupils with SEND well. Staff identify needs quickly. They plan appropriately so that pupils can access the curriculum. Staff support pupils' wider development so that pupils with SEND are fully included in school life.

Pupils develop strong and trusting relationships with staff. They show positive attitudes to learning and this leads to calm classrooms. Disruption to learning is rare. Teachers say that because of this they can 'get on with their job'. Pupils play cooperatively at playtimes and lunchtimes. Older pupils support younger ones.

There is a purposeful, friendly atmosphere in school. Through assemblies, leaders encourage pupils to develop a sense of spirituality and wonder. They are supported well in this by the local priest. Staff teach pupils to be respectful to all, including those of different backgrounds and faiths. Pupils enjoy taking on responsibilities, such as being 'buddies' for younger pupils, helping in the office and being school librarians.

Governors and leaders know the school well. Governors offer effective support and challenge to school leaders. Staff say that leaders are caring and understanding. They appreciate how well senior leaders consider their work/life balance and well-being.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders make safeguarding a top priority of the school. Staff receive regular safeguarding training. Careful recruitment checks are carried out on employees and other adults who regularly work in the school.

Staff know it is everyone's responsibility to keep pupils safe. They have excellent knowledge of pupils, their families and the community. This allows them to quickly identify any safeguarding concerns. When they need to, leaders are quick to make sure that pupils get the support they need. Pupils spoken to said that they feel safe in school and know how to stay safe online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Assessment is at an early stage in the wider curriculum subjects. Leaders do not have a detailed understanding of what key knowledge the pupils have remembered. Leaders need to strengthen assessment so that they are clear what knowledge pupils can and cannot retrieve, and make adaptations if necessary.

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 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 good in October 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 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

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| Unique reference number | 123204 |
| Local authority | Oxfordshire |
| Inspection number | 10200179 |
| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Voluntary aided |
| Age range of pupils | 4 to 11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 140 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair of governing body | Mr Patrick Fitzpatrick |
| Headteacher | Mrs Rachel Gavin |
| Website | www.sacred-heart.oxon.sch.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 5 and 6 October 2016, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 |

Information about this school

- Since the last inspection, the deputy headteacher has been promoted to the role of headteacher.
- Since the last inspection, pupil numbers have declined. This has led to two classes being of mixed age.
- The school is part of the Archdiocese of Birmingham. The most recent section 48 inspection of the school took place in February 2020. The school's next section 48 inspection is due to take place in the academic year 2025/26.

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 the school and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspector spoke with the headteacher, assistant headteacher, SEND coordinator, subject leaders and other members of staff. He met remotely with five governors, including the chair of governors. He also held phone calls with a representative of the diocese and a representative from the local authority.

- The inspector observed pupils' behaviour around school, during lessons and at lunch and break times. He also met with groups of pupils to hear their views.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: 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 also looked at the curriculum plans and reviewed samples of pupils' work in some other subjects.
- The inspector reviewed the policies and procedures that school leaders have put in place to keep pupils safe. He spoke to staff and pupils about these procedures. He also looked at some of the checks that leaders have made on the adults who work at the school.
- The 48 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, along with 47 responses to the free-text facility were evaluated.

Inspection team

Felix Rayner, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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