

Inspection of Sacred Heart Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School

4 Sporle Road, Swaffham, Norfolk PE37 7HL

Inspection dates: 7 and 8 February 2024

Overall effectiveness	Inadequate
The quality of education	Inadequate
Behaviour and attitudes	Requires improvement
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Requires improvement
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils do not learn as much as they should. This is because the curriculum does not help pupils to steadily build new and important knowledge. Pupils do not get enough opportunities to practise what they have learned. Many pupils do not make sufficient progress with key skills, such as calculation and reading. They are not well prepared for learning in secondary school.

This is a school where pupils can make good friends. They embrace difference and are keen to help each other out. Staff guide pupils to emulate school values, such as respect. Pupils know they can go to an adult if they have a worry. However, pupils' lessons are sometimes disrupted by noise and lack of attention. Some pupils' behaviour needs to improve so that others feel safer and happier at school.

Pupils can contribute to the community, go on trips and take part in sporting events. For example, children in the early years take walks in the town and go to the pantomime at Christmas. Everyone looks forward to the annual village pancake race. Pupils also have opportunities to perform, such as through taking part in a national performance alongside other schools and professional musicians.

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

The school does not prepare pupils for the next stage of their education. This is because there is no coherently planned curriculum. Teachers are left to plan lessons without sufficient guidance. Dedicated staff attempt to design suitable learning experiences. However, in the absence of oversight of the curriculum and staff training, pupils experience disconnected lessons. As a result, many pupils leave school unable to read, write or calculate well. They do not remember what they have learned in subjects such as history.

Pupils of all ages enjoy listening to stories. However, early reading lessons do not focus enough on what pupils need to learn or provide enough opportunities for practice. Staff do not have the expertise needed to teach reading well. There is suitable support to help younger pupils at the earlier stage of reading. However, older pupils who find reading tough do not get enough support to catch up. This means they struggle to access the wider curriculum.

A new and improved approach to identifying and supporting pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is under way. The school is identifying pupils' needs more accurately and swiftly. However, pupils with SEND do not always receive the right kind of support in the classroom. They sometimes struggle to cope with changes to the environment and the people around them. This affects their ability to access the curriculum. They do not achieve as well as they should.

The school has recently adopted a new approach to managing pupils' behaviour. Pupils know how they are expected to behave. Staff have received training on how to respond to challenging behaviour. Disruption to learning now happens less often.

However, expectations still vary from class to class. Staff do not make the best use of routines. Sometimes classrooms are too noisy and pupils do not focus on what the teacher is saying.

Staff support children in the early years to take part in a range of activities. They encourage children to 'have a go'. However, activities are not always designed well. This is because the curriculum lacks clarity and detail. As a result, children do not have enough opportunities to practise key skills, such as writing. Adults are patient and kind. Warm relationships help adults to get to know children well.

The school's provision for personal development is strong. Pupils learn how to keep safe, how to have positive relationships and how to stay healthy through the personal, social and health education curriculum. The school emphasises values such as respect and tolerance. Pupils are very accepting of difference.

The school has begun to address long-standing weaknesses. Staff, leaders and governors are working together to improve the school. They have been hampered in their efforts by turbulence in leadership. The local authority and the Diocese of East Anglia have helped the school to overcome some pressing issues. They have supported staff to take on more responsibilities. However, there has not been the time to resolve many issues the school is facing.

Governors are using their expertise to support new school leaders in setting a direction for the school. This includes a gradual approach to improving school leadership responsibilities. Leaders see regular communication with parents and carers as an important part of improving the school. This approach has helped to improve rates of attendance. Staff feel supported. Parents appreciate the improvements the school has made already, such as for behaviour.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school's curriculum lacks clarity, coherence and detail. Pupils experience a disconnected education and, as a result, too many pupils leave school unprepared for secondary school. The school should review the overall curriculum and ensure that staff understand what knowledge should be taught and when.
- Teachers do not teach and assess the curriculum well. This includes early reading. The school has not provided the guidance and training needed for them to do so. As a result, pupils do not learn and remember as much as they should. The school should ensure that teachers have the expertise needed to teach the curriculum, including for early reading, effectively.

- In-class support and adaptations to teaching do not always meet the needs of pupils with SEND. As a result, pupils with SEND are sometimes unable to access the curriculum. They do not achieve as well as they should. The school should ensure that staff have the expertise needed to adapt teaching, so that pupils with SEND can access the curriculum successfully.
- Staff do not share the same high expectations for pupils' behaviour. As a result, classrooms are sometimes too noisy and pupils do not focus enough on what the teacher is saying. The school should ensure that all staff consistently follow the school's behaviour policy and expected routines.

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.

Further information

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

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	147290
Local authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	10295112
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	108
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Andrew Stone
Headteacher	Teresa Selvey (Interim Headteacher)
Website	www.shcprimary.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school became a maintained school on 1 September 2019.
- The school does not make use of alternative provision for pupils.
- At the time of this inspection, the local authority and the Diocese of East Anglia had commissioned an interim headteacher to work with the school from September 2023.
- The substantive headteacher was absent at the time of the inspection.
- The school is part of the Diocese of East Anglia. There has not been a denominational inspection of the school since it opened.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

In accordance with section 44(2) of the Education Act 2005, His Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with some pupils about their learning and looked at a sample of pupils' work. Inspectors also discussed the curriculum in some other subjects.
- The lead inspector met with the interim headteacher, a representative from the local authority and the special educational needs coordinator. The lead inspector also met with members of the governing body, including the chair of governors, who was also the diocesan representative.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school.
- The lead inspector looked at a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation document.
- The lead inspector considered 23 responses made by parents to Ofsted Parent View, including 17 free-text responses. The lead inspector also considered 12 responses to Ofsted's survey for staff and 19 responses to Ofsted's survey for pupils. Inspectors gathered the views of parents, staff and pupils through discussions during the course of the inspection.

Inspection team

Hannah Stoten, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Imran Khan

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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