



Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 117493
LEA HERTFORDSHIRE LEA
Inspection number 280098
Inspection dates 11 May 2006 to 12 May 2006
Reporting inspector Mr. Keith Sadler LI

This inspection was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary	School address	Broadmeads
School category	Voluntary aided		SG12 9HY
Age range of pupils	4 to 11		
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01920 461678
Number on roll	152	Fax number	01920 461418
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs.Eileen Silcock
Date of previous inspection	4 December 2000	Headteacher	Miss. Claire McDonnell

Age group 4 to 11	Inspection dates 11 May 2006 - 12 May 2006	Inspection number 280098
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Sacred Heart is a smaller than average sized Catholic primary school. Almost all pupils come from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is very low. Most pupils come from above average socio-economic backgrounds and the proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is extremely low. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is about half the national average. Attainment on entry to the school is above that found nationally.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is an improving school with some outstanding features. The inspection confirms the school's view that its overall effectiveness is good. Pupils make good progress, achieve well, love their school and therefore enjoy learning. Their personal development is outstanding with excellent behaviour and outstanding moral and social development. Children get off to a flying start in the Reception class, where provision is of high quality. They settle quickly and achieve very well. The quality of teaching and learning is good. By the time they leave school, standards are exceptionally high in English and mathematics and above average in science. Standards are not so high in science because there are not enough opportunities for practical and investigative activities. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of all aspects of the school. They are unanimous in their opinion that their children enjoy school, that behaviour is good, and that the school is well led and managed. The arrangements for the care, guidance and support of the pupils are good. The curriculum for English, mathematics and the Foundation Stage are excellent, although there is a weakness in the curriculum for science and also information and communication technology (ICT). In ICT the weakness is due, in the main, to the lack of resources for the subject. As a result, the curriculum is satisfactory overall. Leadership and management are good. There has been good improvement since the last inspection and there is significant capacity for further improvement. The new headteacher has made an excellent start and is already providing good leadership and management. She is supported well by the senior teacher, who although new to the post, has also already made a positive impact, particularly in her leadership of science and ICT. Working together, the senior team have put good plans into place to make the necessary improvements in these areas. Governors, too, play a positive role in the school's success. The school's self evaluation processes are excellent. The work of the school is assessed critically through the thorough examination and analysis of teaching and learning, and its impact upon pupils' progress. Clear priorities for improvement are set and met. The impact of improvement strategies, for example, that focused on mathematics in the last year, has been positive. Staff and governors strive for continual improvement, to good effect. The school offers good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Strengthen the science curriculum by ensuring that there is a clear focus to develop the pupils' investigative skills.
- Ensure that the planned new resources for ICT are introduced to strengthen the ICT curriculum and its application in other subjects.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good for all groups of pupils and the challenging targets set for them are invariably met. Children usually start Reception with above average standards and they make rapid progress in Reception and good progress in Years 1 and 2. This is due

to the consistently good teaching and the positive atmosphere for learning that helps the children to become confident and secure in their learning and to attain high standards. Pupils continue to achieve well in the junior classes except in science. By the time that they leave school, standards are exceptionally high in English, significantly above average in mathematics and above average in science. Pupils' progress and achievement in science are only satisfactory because the curriculum has weaknesses, particularly in the development of the pupils' scientific skills. The school is successful in its support of pupils that have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and in consequence, these pupils make good progress. The few pupils that are learning English as an additional language make excellent progress and achieve well. This is due both to the quality of support from the school's staff and visiting specialist support.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The pupils' personal development is outstanding. The exemplary behaviour of the pupils, in class and around the school, combined with very positive attitudes towards learning, contributes to their enjoyment and results in good achievement and a happy supportive atmosphere. Attendance is above average. Moral and social development are outstanding. Pupils are very considerate towards adults and each other. Learners flourish in a very caring, supportive atmosphere, and the excellent relationships help to nurture the pupils' keen sense of community. Opportunities for spiritual reflection and moral awareness are very evident in assemblies. Children's cultural awareness is good, and is reinforced through visits as well as in the classroom. Pupils have a good understanding of their own safety. For example, during the inspection younger pupils were able to explain why they needed to wear a cap when playing out in the hot sun. Pupils make a good contribution to the community. They have a good understanding of the importance of a healthy lifestyle, with the school promoting healthy food initiatives and drugs education. Pupils are prepared very well for the next stage of education and life generally, both by the school's focus on developing the core skills of numeracy and literacy, and the way they develop as confident, mature individuals. In particular, pupils welcome the opportunity to take responsibility through involvement in the school council and other initiatives that give the pupils a strong sense of personal security and self-worth. These include planning and implementing money-raising events for charity such as talent shows, making magazines and running a cake stall.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. Children enjoy learning because teachers provide high levels of challenge and make sure that lessons are interesting. For example, the interactive whiteboards are used very well and help to increase interest. Relationships are excellent and there is a very positive atmosphere in which pupils thrive. In the Foundation Stage, the teacher uses the children's ideas exceptionally well to build on

their experiences. This helps to excite and maintain interest. Teachers invariably share objectives with the pupils and this helps them to know what it is they are learning. Clear targets for improvement are given in English and mathematics and the pupils know what they are and how to improve their work. Teachers question pupils very well. For example, in an outstanding Year 4/5 literacy lesson, the teacher's high expectations presented significant challenge. This was met well by the pupils who could identify the key features of the poem being studied, including identifying it being written in the first person and its syllabic structure. This led to rapid progress and high levels of enjoyment and achievement. Children who find learning difficult are supported well by knowledgeable teaching assistants who are effective in helping them to meet their targets. Assessment activities are an important factor in the effective teaching and they are used well to ensure that future work meets pupils' needs. However, there are too few opportunities taken to make structured and systematic use of ICT to support teaching and learning across the curriculum.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory overall. The curriculum for numeracy and literacy are very good and that for the children in the Foundation Stage is highly effective because national guidelines are used well and are adapted successfully to meet the children's needs. The curriculum is enriched well. Pupils enjoy attending a good range of additional activities and a residential visit. Good opportunities are provided for the pupils to work collaboratively and teachers work hard to help them to make connections between subjects. Although statutory requirements are met, there is a weakness in the science curriculum because too little emphasis has been placed on developing pupils' investigative skills. Also, curriculum plans for science have not been sufficiently well adapted from national guidelines to meet the needs of the pupils in the school. In addition, the paucity of effective ICT resources, particularly of computers, has limited the ICT curriculum. As a result, teachers have not been able to plan to include ICT in teaching and learning in other subjects.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school provides good care, support and guidance for children, with some outstanding features. All the staff know the pupils very well and levels of care are excellent, with pupils thriving in the supportive atmosphere. Procedures for ensuring child protection and risk assessment are securely in place and are regularly reviewed. The school is very successful in helping children to feel secure, and there is a strong emphasis on teaching them to live healthily. Those with additional needs are well supported, for example through individual education plans and specialised help for the few pupils that speak English as an additional language. Good efforts are made to extend the most able older pupils in literacy and numeracy, though less so in science. Pupils have a clear understanding of their targets. Their progress is carefully tracked and they receive good feedback on their progress in class.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher has made an outstanding start and has the confidence of staff, pupils and parents. She has a clear vision for the school, which is based on her high expectations of both the children's personal and academic achievement. She has forged a strong team spirit in the school amongst both staff and children. Hence, there is an atmosphere in which both children and staff thrive. Working in close partnership with the new senior teacher, there is good capacity to secure further improvements in both provision and achievement. Self evaluation processes are excellent, with regular and systematic monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning undertaken. Weaknesses that are identified are followed through with rigour and the level of accountability for staff has been strengthened. The impact has been for greater consistency in the quality of teaching and learning. This adds to the school's effectiveness. Improvement planning processes are very good. The school development plan, prepared by the previous head, is of very good quality. The process for its development was exemplary, with parents, staff and pupils being thoroughly consulted and appropriate priorities set. Governance is of high quality. Governors support and challenge the school well and have a thorough understanding of the school's strengths. Through their excellent arrangements for gaining information from head teacher reports and systematic visiting of the school, they are clear about developmental points and how to achieve even higher results.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	1	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	NA
The behaviour of learners	1	NA
The attendance of learners	2	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	1	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

I am writing to thank you very much for making me so welcome when I visited your school recently and also to tell you what I found. I know that you are very proud of your school and enjoy lessons. I think that you go to a good school where you learn quickly and well. All the adults look after you very well and take care to make sure that there is always someone to look after you if you feel sad or unwell. You play your part in this by taking care of your classmates and other children in the school making sure that everyone is happy. Your behaviour is excellent. The teachers make sure that your lessons are interesting and hard enough to make you learn well and attain high standards, particularly in literacy and numeracy. Your headteacher leads the school well. She has lots of ideas for making it better still. There are two things that I have asked your headteacher and teachers to work on. I have asked them to make sure that you get more chance to use computers, and I know that you are excited because you will soon have your new computer suite to do this. I have also asked them to give you more chance to study practical science. With best wishes for the future.