



Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 105074
Local Authority Wirral
Inspection number 287115
Inspection date 22 November 2006
Reporting inspector Mark Madeley

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Danger Lane
School category	Voluntary aided		Moreton, Wirral
Age range of pupils	3-11		Merseyside CH46 8UG
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0151 6771091
Number on roll (school)	353	Fax number	0151 6050100
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Canon B Hoban
		Headteacher	Mr P Freeman
Date of previous school inspection	8 May 2002		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This school is much larger than average. Two thirds of its children live in the immediate vicinity of the school in a mixture of owner-occupied and local authority housing. The parents of the remaining third choose to send their children here from further away. Virtually all the children are of White British heritage. The percentage of children eligible for free school meals is above average. Approximately one in ten children has some form of learning difficulty and/or disability, predominately moderate learning difficulties, which is below the national average.

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 a good school which gives good value for money. Most parents hold the school in very high regard. One parent, echoing the views of the vast majority, stated that the school had given her children

'an excellent grounding. They are all confident, caring, well mannered, intelligent people who enjoyed school and gained a lot from the brilliant staff.'

Effective management has improved attendance and maintained good standards since the last inspection. Managers know the many strengths and the areas for development of the school because they keep a close check on all aspects of its work. This understanding and the subsequent effective actions taken contribute significantly to the school's good capacity to improve further. For example, outstanding systems check the progress of individual children and groups, like boys or girls or children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, to ensure that everyone achieves to their potential. The governing body is very well led and fulfils the roles of supporting the school and being its 'critical friend' well.

Children start school with below average attainment. Good provision in the Foundation Stage helps children settle quickly, grow in confidence and make good progress in all the areas of learning. Across the school, progress is good because teaching is effective in meeting the children's needs. Children achieve well, and in the national tests in Year 6 have for the last five years reached above average results in English, mathematics and science. Children enjoy school and are very keen to learn. Teachers make lessons interesting and use questioning well to involve all children. Behaviour is exceptional. Children in Years 5 and 6 know their learning targets very well and identify when they have been achieved. Their work is marked exceptionally well so they know how to improve it further. A significant minority of other children have a weak understanding of their learning targets and teachers' marking does not consistently tell them how to improve their work further. Teachers use the information gained in lessons and the wealth of test data provided by the outstanding checking systems to good effect when planning to meet the needs of the children.

The curriculum is good, particularly in English, mathematics and science, and this enables children to do well in these core subjects. Children really enjoy and benefit greatly from the excellent range of clubs, trips and special focus weeks, like the recent history week where children dressed up in Victorian costume and experienced Victorian life. These activities broaden their understanding of the world around them and make learning interesting and fun. Children are very good at making healthy food choices and engaging in physical activity in order to stay fit and well. Though a very small minority of parents have some concerns about safety, children report that they feel safe from bullying in school and know how to stay safe outside school. They take very seriously the responsibilities they are given and carry them out to the best of their ability.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the quality and consistency of teachers' marking so that all children know how to improve their work further.
- Ensure that all children understand their learning targets and know how to achieve them.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Children start school with a broad range of attainment but overall it is below average. At this stage, most children talk freely to staff, play sensibly with toys and help take their own coat off. However, up to one third have indistinct speech, find it difficult to sit and listen to stories and have little knowledge of simple songs and rhymes. Good teaching in the Foundation Stage helps children quickly settle, develop confidence and learn through play activities. When they join Year 1, children's attainment is similar to national expectations, though their attainment in language skills was lower than the other areas of learning in 2006.

Children make satisfactory progress through Key Stage 1. The results of teacher assessments in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of this key stage have been average for the last five years. Good teaching of reading and writing has helped children improve their language skills.

Results in national tests in English, mathematics and science at the end of Key Stage 2 have been consistently above average for the last five years. This represents good progress in mathematics and science and outstanding progress in English. Children are taught well, build on the skills previous consolidated in Years 1 and 2 and receive a great deal of feedback through teachers' marking which helps them to improve their work.

The progress of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good. The school uses many additional programmes, which experienced support staff are fully trained to deliver, to meet their needs.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The school modestly judges this aspect to be good but the inspection finds it to be outstanding. The school's motto of 'Care, courtesy and commitment' permeates every activity and this approach ensures that children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is also outstanding. Children really look forward to coming to school and this is reflected in above average attendance levels. Children are very confident, well mannered and behave well all the time. They are very keen to learn. Teachers' questions are frequently followed by a forest of hands up from children keen to answer. Children have an extensive knowledge of how to stay fit and well and use the excellent range of sports opportunities very well. They feel safe in school and know simple ways to

keep themselves safe, like crossing the roads carefully and never giving out personal details on the Internet. Elections for the new school council gave children an idea of voting procedures and those elected are already bringing to management's attention the children's views of their school. Children are very well prepared for the next stage in their learning, having made good progress in their learning and developed very good social skills.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Staff ensure that children are happy in class and want to learn by making lessons interesting. They are making greater use of new technology to enliven lessons for children. Lesson planning is detailed and tasks are set which meet the needs of children of differing abilities. What children will learn in the lesson is not consistently shared with the children, or referred to at the end, so children are sometimes unclear of how well they have learned. In the Foundation Stage children's learning is thoroughly planned and well organised. Children learn through play activities, like in the 'post office' where children talked freely about delivering the post using good vocabulary, such as 'envelope' and 'stamp', and tried to write letters to friends. All teachers use questioning very well to get children to explain their thinking and enhance their learning. An excellent example, in a science lesson for higher-ability Year 5 and year 6 children, helped children deduce that the speed at which objects sank was linked to the surface area of the face in contact with the water. Teachers' marking in Years 5 and 6 helps children improve their work and thus make very good progress. In other age groups, marking is of inconsistent quality and rarely gives children ideas for improvement. The staff use assessment data very well to identify those children who need additional support or further challenge.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum meets the needs of the children and the requirements of the National Curriculum. Topics are carefully planned, frequently using the national guidance, and enhanced by focus weeks, like the recent art and history weeks. The children very fondly recall these special events and their high quality work is reflected in the good displays around the school. Children make good use of their literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects but planned use of computer skills is less well developed. The excellent range of school clubs gives children outstanding opportunities to exercise or develop their love of the arts further. The school's extensive provision for the arts and sports, and its very high degree of success in inter-school games, have been recognised by the Artsmark and the Activemark awards. Children value the educational visits, which broaden their life experiences. They look forward to the annual residential visit because it is a wonderful opportunity for children to build teamwork and problem-solving skills as well as to have a good time away from Mum and Dad!

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The first word of the school motto is 'Care' and all adults place children's safety as their highest priority. The vast majority of parents agree that their children are safe at school and very well looked after. Procedures for safeguarding children are in place and staff know their roles and responsibilities. All parents feel well informed about school events and their child's attainment and progress because newsletters are of good quality and children's school reports are very detailed. Older children have an excellent understanding of their individual learning targets and how they will achieve them. They welcome the chance to check the work of their 'buddy' and think that it also improves their own understanding. A minority of younger children do not understand the learning target system and so it has much less impact on their learning.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The school is well led and managed. All staff consistently follow the school's mission statement to achieve each child's full academic and personal potential.

It is the reason why one third of parents choose to bring their children to this school from outside the area. The headteacher and deputy headteacher work very effectively together because they have complementary skills. Rigorous systems for checking the quality of the school's work are in place. Children's progress is regularly checked and effective action taken if a child's progress falters. Teaching is regularly observed and suggestions given, and later checked, to help staff improve. All staff demonstrate through their planning and teaching that they have very high expectations of what children can achieve. Management bases its well thought out forward planning closely on an evaluation of the school's performance. Staff with subject responsibility use a good range of methods to check on teaching and children's progress. Their subject action plans are satisfactory. They are written so as to improve children's learning but it is not always clear how the success of initiatives will be recognised and evaluated. Resources are carefully allocated and spending evaluated. For example, the governing body approved the employment of a staff member with responsibility for improving attendance and attendance has improved markedly. Governance is good. The governing body fully supports the headteacher and the school. Through its good committee structure it keeps a good overview of health and safety, spending and forward planning.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

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

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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you very much for making me so welcome when I recently visited your school. It was excellent that so many of you felt confident to speak with me and share your views of the school. I listened carefully to what you said and valued your opinions. I agree with you and your parents that yours is a good school. It is very capably led by your headteacher, who you all think highly of. Good teaching helps you make good progress in English, mathematics and science. Older children understand how to improve their work. You value the staff because they care so well for you and because they give you an outstanding range of clubs and visits.

The school said that your behaviour and attitudes in lessons were good but I disagree. I think it is outstanding! Well done to everyone! You also remember a great deal about staying fit and well and how to be safe outside school. I think that your knowledge of British culture from your literacy, history and geography lessons is really good. You take on responsibilities very well. For instance, in the Foundation Stage children help tidy away very well while higher up the school you are keen to be school councillors or play leaders.

Even good schools can improve further. I have asked your headteacher to do the following to help make your school a better place for you:

- ask all teachers to tell you what was good about your work and how you can make it even better
- make sure that you all understand your learning targets and how you can achieve them.

You can help your school to improve by maintaining your exceptional behaviour and by continuing to be very keen to answer teachers' questions. I wish you and your school well for the future.