



Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Primary School Blackburn

Inspection Report

Better
education
and care

Unique Reference Number 119510
Local Authority Blackburn with Darwen
Inspection number 291443
Inspection dates 18–19 January 2007
Reporting inspector Lynne Read

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Lynwood Road
School category	Voluntary aided		Blackburn, Lancashire
Age range of pupils	4–11		BB2 6HQ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01254 54851
Number on roll (school)	194	Fax number	01254 54851
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr Nick Kennedy
		Headteacher	Mr Andrew Wood
Date of previous school inspection	1 April 2002		

Age group 4–11	Inspection dates 18–19 January 2007	Inspection number 291443
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This average-sized primary school serves a culturally diverse area of Blackburn. The proportion of pupils claiming free school meals is above average. When children enter the Reception class, their development is below that usually seen. There is a higher percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities than is seen in most schools. The majority of pupils are of Asian heritage and around one quarter is from White British backgrounds. Around one sixth of pupils are in the early stages of learning English as an additional language.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Sacred Heart judges itself as a good school and the inspectors agree. It provides good value for money. Parents express good confidence in the school. One wrote, 'It is a wonderful school where teachers are dedicated to the children and go out of their way to ensure their happiness.' Parents' and pupils' views are valued and acted upon and good links with outside agencies and other schools support pupils' learning well.

The headteacher provides very good leadership, which promotes strong teamwork and a shared vision for excellence. Management is good and firmly focused on high standards. Good attention is given to safeguarding pupils. The school's monitoring procedures are very effective in evaluating its performance. Senior and subject managers act quickly whenever an issue is identified. Expert training for staff, the development of special teaching programmes and the recruitment of multi-lingual teaching assistants have all contributed to the school's continued success.

Children receive a good start to their education in the Reception class and make good progress in Key Stages 1 and 2. By the time pupils leave Year 6, standards are above average and the pupils generally achieve well. Staff acted swiftly to rectify the slight dip in achievement in 2005. The improvements made to teaching led to attainment in the 2006 tests that is better than in most schools, with a significant percentage of pupils reaching the higher Level 5 grade.

The good standards and achievement result from good teaching, a stimulating curriculum and helpful advice and support given to pupils. There is a strong emphasis on developing speaking and listening skills and pupils read extensively for study and pleasure. However, there are insufficient opportunities for writing when studying other subjects.

Pupils' personal development is good and a strength of the school. Pupils of different faiths and backgrounds work and play happily together and say they feel safe. They learn about responsibility by acting as 'playleaders' and through their school council. This helps them to develop a sense of community and prepares them well for life in the wider world. Since the last inspection, very good improvements have been made, especially in leadership and management and attainment in computer work. There is good capacity to maintain the strengths at Sacred Heart and to improve even further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Extend opportunities for pupils to write when studying other subjects in order to improve writing standards overall.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Attainment is above average and progress from the Reception class to Year 6 is good. Children's attainment at entry to Reception is below that usually seen for the age

group with significant weaknesses in English language and personal skills. They make especially good progress in personal development and their understanding and use of English. By Year 1, their attainment is just below average.

Pupils make good progress in Key Stage 1 and, by the end of Year 2, standards are average. Convincing records show that the Year 6 pupils in 2006 made good progress in Key Stage 2, reflecting the good achievement seen in 2003 and 2004. Achievement dipped slightly in 2005, although standards remained above average. Managers and staff were quick to act to improve the teaching of reading and provide extra support for older pupils learning English as an additional language. In 2006, attainment was much better than that seen in most schools with a very good percentage of pupils attaining the higher level.

Pupils who have learning difficulties and disabilities make good progress; they develop good levels of self-esteem. In 2005, girls outperformed boys but now both groups achieve equally well. Extensive measures have been introduced to support the growing numbers of pupils who are learning English as an additional language so they progress well.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good and the school makes good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Spiritual and moral development is continually supported by the school's religious ethos; they are well promoted in assemblies and in pupils' work across the curriculum. Cultural development is a strength of the school. The school is rightfully proud of the way children of different faiths and backgrounds work and play very well together.

Pupils enjoy coming to school and behave well. They are happy and confident learners because they have very good relationships with their teachers and their efforts are valued. Pupils feel safe and secure. They say isolated incidents of bullying are dealt with promptly and are confident that they can approach a member of staff if they have a worry.

Pupils are taught the importance of a healthy diet and exercise. They bring healthy snacks and enjoy the wide range of sporting and physical activities arranged. There is a strong community spirit in school with pupils collecting for charities, helping others and taking on responsibilities such as being prefects and members of the school council. These activities prepare them well for future education and work. Attendance is generally close to average. The school is working hard with families to reduce the disruption to children's education from extended holidays and is beginning to see some success.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good and sometimes outstanding. Tasks are very well planned to cater for pupils' differing abilities and the more able have good challenge to stretch them. Well trained teaching assistants provide good, sensitive support for pupils who need extra help, enabling them to do well. Lessons often contain a series of short, focused tasks. This helps to maintain pupils' concentration, and leads to good attitudes to learning. Teaching and learning in the Reception class are good. The class is a hive of activity where children practise and consolidate the new skills they are taught in class and group sessions. Throughout school and across subjects, teachers constantly assess pupils' work and use that information to plan the next lessons and keep pupils informed about how well they are doing. Where pupils' progress is not meeting the teacher's expectations, special catch-up programmes are introduced. This is an important factor underpinning the pupils' good progress, although marking is variable across the school. Good use is made of computers to support learning and parents support the homework programme well.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good and supports pupils' personal and academic development effectively. The learning environment in the Reception class is very stimulating and invites children to explore. There is no continuous access to outdoor provision for the age group but staff compensate well for this by using the yard, hall and local environment. Throughout school, a strong emphasis is placed on developing the basic skills, including English, mathematics and computer work. However, there is scope to extend the use of writing across the curriculum.

With valuable help from the local sports college and outside professionals, staff overcome the severe lack of suitable play and sports facilities very well. Swimming, popular sports clubs and physical education lessons support pupils' enthusiasm for keeping fit, leading to an Activemark award. Regular visits to places of interest, including residential visits and activity weeks, broaden pupils' horizons and develop pupils' social skills well.

The curriculum meets the needs and capabilities of all learners through many interesting and enjoyable oral and practical tasks, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities or who are learning English as an additional language. Pupils' special gifts or talents in mathematics, art and drama, for example, are developed well.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. Staff know the pupils well and are fully committed to their welfare. Staff go to great lengths to secure expert help or resources to meet pupils' specific needs. All required procedures for child protection, vetting staff and eliminating possible risks to safety are in place.

Reception children are helped to settle quickly. Recently introduced provision for parents and their pre-school children is already having a positive impact on developing early learning skills.

Teachers use effective strategies to check pupils' learning week-by-week and to track progress over time. Pupils have clearly worded target books so they know how to improve and some are regularly involved in checking their own progress.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. Governance is good and all statutory requirements are met. The caring ethos is shared by all staff who work enthusiastically to ensure that pupils have equal access to all activities. The school works hard to celebrate backgrounds and cultures, creating a pleasant and harmonious atmosphere. Parents appreciate this; one wrote, 'Staff are culturally aware and respect the diversity of the community.'

The headteacher leads a strong team, provides good leadership and is instrumental in maintaining the drive for high standards. The staff are also focused on raising the good achievement even further. Senior and subject managers carry out an effective annual cycle of checking and evaluating provision so that the school knows its strengths well. Effective action plans are devised where there is a need for improvement. The school is now seeking to review leadership roles in order to create a better delegation of responsibilities and to enhance management capabilities. Governors bring a good range of experience and expertise to support the school and have a secure overview of standards, achievement and provision.

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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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
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	2

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

Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Primary School Blackburn

Lynwood Road

Blackburn

Lancashire

BB2 6HQ

22 January 2007

Dear Pupils

Thank you very much for the very warm welcome and for helping my colleague and I when we came to visit your school. I would like to tell you what we found out.

Sacred Heart RC Primary is a very friendly school. Your behaviour is generally good and you take really good care of each other. Your teachers and families can be proud of you. You enjoy your learning and take good advantage of the many opportunities for physical exercise and sport.

Your headteacher and staff work very hard to make sure you are happy and safe. You like your teachers and I think that encourages you to try hard. Please thank your parents for sending us lots of replies to the questionnaire. They are very pleased with the school and have hardly any criticisms to make.

You make a good start to your education in the Reception and infant classes and learn a lot. Your progress in the juniors is also good and many of you are working at the higher level by Year 6. You have lots of opportunities to read, either when you are studying other subjects such as history, or simply for pleasure. We think it would help if you had as many opportunities to practise your writing skills. Your teachers agree and so are going to look at ways of doing this. You can help to maintain the good standards in school by continuing to work hard in class and completing your homework tasks on time, as most of you do now. You have good attitudes to learning that should support you well in the future.

Thank you once again for the interesting conversations we had and for letting us know your views so clearly.

Please accept my best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Lynne Read

Lead inspector