



# Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School

## Inspection Report

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**Unique Reference Number** 119606  
**Local Authority** Lancashire  
**Inspection number** 291479  
**Inspection dates** 11–12 January 2007  
**Reporting inspector** June Tracey

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary	<b>School address</b>	Poulton Street
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided		Ashton, Preston
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11		Lancashire, PR2 2SA
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01772 726937
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	120	<b>Fax number</b>	01772 516203
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Deborah O'Donohue
		<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Martin Gee
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 March 2001		

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<b>Age group</b> 4–11	<b>Inspection dates</b> 11–12 January 2007	<b>Inspection number</b> 291479
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

## Description of the school

The school is situated on the outskirts of Preston in an area where much of the housing is over 100 years old. The school roll has declined steadily in recent years; the school has responded to the fall in numbers by grouping pupils in mixed-aged classes. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is average. The vast majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds and there are very few pupils who do not have English as their first language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average and rising. When children join the school in the Reception class, their attainment is broadly average for their age but their social and language and communication skills are weaker than other aspects of their development.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

The school provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. The school's leadership, management and capacity to improve are satisfactory.

The school is working through a difficult period caused by the falling roll and a corresponding reduction of staff numbers. The pupils have adapted to the newly introduced mixed-age classes well and their social development has benefited from mixing with pupils of different ages, particularly in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1. The school is a close-knit community in which pupils, staff and families know, trust and respect each other.

Pupils' personal development is satisfactory. It is underpinned by teachers' concern for each pupil's well-being, in school and beyond. The school provides satisfactory care, support and guidance for its pupils, which are considered, crucial and planned for well. This shows in the way that pupils seek teachers' reassurance and turn to them for help when they have a problem. The school is closely linked to the parish and its Christian ethos is apparent in the way pupils' spiritual and moral development is integral to the work in and beyond lessons. Much of the pupils' experience of working in partnership with the community is developed through the parish and other schools, often through music and sport. Pupils enjoy this and it helps them to form good relationships with their peers and with older people. Pupils of all abilities and backgrounds work happily together, sharing with each other and talking through problems. When working on computers, for example, they willingly share their technical skills and this shows that they are learning important life skills. The curriculum and provision to develop pupils' basic skills are satisfactory. The school is caring and protective. It promotes healthy habits well by encouraging and rewarding good practices. Pupils are knowledgeable about what is needed to sustain a healthy life style, and why. The school achieved National Healthy School Status in 2006.

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Standards in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 are average with pupils making steady and satisfactory progress. In Key Stage 2, standards are broadly average but are not as high in English, mathematics and science as they should be. In recent years, the national test results in this stage have varied, which reflects pupils' inconsistent progress. The school's vigorous response over the last year to these concerns, in collaboration with the local authority, is having a positive effect and progress is improving.

Open, self-searching and accurate evaluation of the school's work and national test results led the headteacher, staff and governors to express serious concern to the local authority last year. As a result, the school was included in the local authority's Intensifying Support Programme. This programme has resulted in rigorous systems to monitor the school's work and a fresh look at teaching styles to accommodate pupils' different ways of learning. Teaching is satisfactory overall and some is good, although the quality is inconsistent in Key Stage 2. A more flexible approach to the planning of the content of lessons to engage pupils' interest is having a positive effect on teaching, learning and progress, particularly that of the boys. This is leading, in turn,

to better progress in Key Stage 2 and average standards in Year 6. Teachers' assessment of pupils' progress and the marking of their work show the pupils what they need to do to achieve higher standards. Pupils are taking more ownership of their own learning as a result. Pupils in Key Stage 2 say that 'things are changing.' Much still remains to be done but there are signs that the school feels reinvigorated and there is an appetite for success and attainment of the targets set for 2007.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

The school should:

- raise standards in English, mathematics and science in Key Stage 2
- improve the consistency of teaching to raise the satisfactory teaching to equal the best
- regularly monitor the effect of the local authority's Intensifying Support Programme to ensure that its rigour is sustained.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 3**

Currently, pupils are achieving satisfactorily. Children make steady progress in the Foundation Stage and the majority reach the early learning goals for their age by the end of the Reception year. Satisfactory progress is sustained in Key Stage 1. Standards are average overall in reading, writing and mathematics in Year 2. This is confirmed by consistent results of national tests of Year 2 pupils over time. Standards in Year 6 are broadly average but should be higher than they are. This is because pupils' progress in Key Stage 2 has not been good enough in recent years. Their results in the national tests taken in Year 6, although broadly average, have varied too much, particularly in mathematics and science. The school did not meet its statutory targets in 2006, although the higher ability pupils' results improved because they were a target group that year. The school says that the 2006 Year 6 results were not unexpected because of complex social issues that affected the progress of the whole class. In general, boys do not achieve as well as girls, particularly in writing, and this is a key point for action in the teachers' planning.

The school's vigorous response in the last year to concern about progress in Key Stage 2 is having a positive effect. Progress across the key stage has improved. New and wide-ranging teaching methods are engaging pupils' interest and awareness of their own progress. Boys' progress is improving, particularly in English. This year's statutory targets for Year 6 are challenging but realistic. Pupils and teachers are striving hard to meet them. Throughout the school, pupils of all abilities, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities or additional language needs, are making satisfactory progress. The current, robust approach to teaching and learning is focused on maintaining this progress and raising standards in Key Stage 2.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 3

Pupils' personal development and well-being are satisfactory. Pupils behave sensibly, with respect for each other's feelings in response to satisfactory levels of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils say that they feel safe and secure in this relatively small, close community. Attendance is average and pupils are aware of its importance to the continuity of their learning. Pupils are beginning to take advantage of opportunities to make their views known through the school council, which is relatively new. Representatives are elected democratically and take their responsibilities seriously. They are astute when assessing what goes on in the school. Pupils talk knowledgeably about healthy living. They understand the importance of physical activity and the effect of diet on their long-term health, so much so that they comment to each other when they observe a poor response to what they consider good practice.

Teaching methods clearly spell out to pupils of all ages where the work influences their life out of school. Pupils respond well to this, for example, in the Year 4 mathematics lesson in which they related different ways of adding numbers together mentally to calculate the cost of shopping. Pupils' technical skills are well developed for their age. They apply these competently when working independently on computers to consolidate understanding or to research work in other subjects. Speaking and listening skills are adequate in enabling pupils to contribute to lessons, but their range of vocabulary is narrow. This sometimes diminishes pupils' confidence in their ability to express themselves fluently.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 3

Teaching is satisfactory overall and some is good. However, the quality is inconsistent in Key Stage 2. Teaching has been recently strengthened through the school's involvement in the Intensifying Support Programme. The immediate impact of the programme, observed during the inspection, is seen in teachers using their subject expertise and a wide range of strategies to engage individual pupils in forms of learning that hold their attention and motivate them to learn more. This approach is having a significant effect on boys' learning. A typical example was a Year 4/5 English lesson in which boys chose their own questions to research information for a non-chronological report on The Romans; the boys veered towards armies and weaponry, the girls towards dates and fashions of the times. The use of assessment to check learning and influence subsequent plans for lessons is improving the quality and progression of learning. Pupils know and talk about the steps that they will need to take in the next lesson. The best lessons involve a diverse range of activities, each timed to a deadline. This keeps pupils engrossed and keen to meet the teachers' expectations. Not all lessons

have this pace; although satisfactory, they sometimes lack a sense of urgency at times when pupils move to new tasks.

Teaching in the mixed-age classes is well planned. Teachers differentiate the work carefully to suit pupils' ability and progress in the subject. Good support from teaching assistants leads to pupils of all abilities, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, having ready access to adult help during independent work. One-to-one discussions with pupils and the marking of written work are helping pupils to know exactly what it is that they have to do to improve their work further. The staff are resolute in their determination to improve the pupils' progress and raise standards.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 3**

The curriculum meets pupils' needs satisfactorily and statutory requirements are met. Provision for ICT has improved substantially since the previous inspection, which has raised standards in the subject to broadly average across the school. The development of literacy and numeracy skills is not yet fully integrated into plans in other subjects of the curriculum. This is a missed opportunity, especially for the promotion of writing skills.

The provision of extra-curricular activities, including opportunities for instrumental lessons, benefits those pupils who have wider interests in sport and music. When questioned, many pupils said how much they enjoyed practical activities, such as in design and technology, art and physical education. This echoes the greater interest and motivation that teachers are noticing in other lessons when opportunities are provided for learning through hands-on, practical experiences.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 3**

The school provides satisfactory care, support and guidance for its pupils. The care and support are considered, crucial and planned for well. The safeguarding and protection of pupils have high priority and procedures are known by all adults. Pupils with moderate and severe learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive timely support when their needs are diagnosed and assessed. Help for those with lesser difficulties takes longer to organise because of pressure on the organising teacher's time and the number of pupils involved. Guidance for pupils in their academic work is satisfactory; it is improving as a consequence of recent additions to whole-school assessment procedures. Information is being applied more effectively than in the past to track pupils' progress at regular intervals and to set targets. It is too early to determine the full impact of the redesigned assessment system.

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## Leadership and management

### Grade: 3

The school is satisfactorily led, managed and governed. There has been satisfactory improvement in some aspects since the previous inspection, particularly in the provision and standards in information and communication technology (ICT), but other issues have arisen connected with progress in Years 3 to 6. The headteacher, staff and governors openly voiced their concern about Key Stage 2 to the local authority. As a welcomed consequence, action was taken to include the school in the Intensifying Support Programme from last year. The swift response to its implementation has resulted in strengthened and coherent systems that are improving the quality of teaching, assessment and pupils' progress in Key Stage 2. Evidence of the latter was clearly seen during the inspection. Pupils in Year 6 in particular are working keenly towards their predicted targets. Governors have supported the appointment of additional teaching assistants to work with targeted groups of pupils whose progress was found to be at risk. Monitoring and checks through performance management are ensuring tight control and regular evaluation of teaching, standards and progress. Finances have been managed carefully to budget for the period of falling rolls. Much still remains to be done to secure consistent standards and steady progress but there is sufficient evidence at the present time to indicate that the school is providing satisfactory value for money.



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## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	<b>School Overall</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The behaviour of learners	3
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

### The quality of provision

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

<sup>1</sup> 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

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
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 Catholic Primary School

Poulton Street

Ashton

Preston

Lancashire

PR2 2SA

11 January 2007

Dear Pupils

Thank you for welcoming me and talking to me about your work. Most of you seem to like school, particularly when you do practical work in design and technology, art and physical education. I hope that you like other subjects too because the skills you learn are going to be very important to you as you grow up. I noticed that your teachers drew your attention to this in lessons. You probably thought that I moved a lot from class to class and amongst the various groups. This was because I wanted to find out how you were learning and whether you knew how to improve your work. The older ones amongst you told me about your individual targets and how your teachers questioned you about them. I thought that this was good and I liked the way that some of you linked your own targets to the main ones for the year group that are on display. I hope that this will help you to raise the standard of your work to higher levels, especially the boys, because you have not achieved as well as the girls in recent years.

Your headteacher and class teachers are very anxious that you should do as well as you can. I have suggested to them that you could be helped even more through activities that allow you to learn in ways that suit you best. Some of you are obviously happy to work directly from books but I know that others like learning in practical ways. Both ways are good, it just depends which helps you most when studying a particular topic. Another way in which you can help yourselves is to practise your writing. It needs to be accurate, with good punctuation, so that those who read it know exactly what you mean and enjoy reading it.

Lastly, my thanks to those of you on the school council who gave me an insight into the school from a pupil's point of view. It helped me to hear it directly from you because the whole purpose of the school is to provide for you and for your future. I wish you success at school and in your own lives. Work hard and never forget that education will be the gateway to your future.

Yours sincerely

June Tracey

Lead Inspector