



Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 120222
Local Authority Leicester City
Inspection number 291673
Inspection dates 1–2 November 2006
Reporting inspector Rajinder Harrison

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Mere Close
School category	Community		off Mere Road
Age range of pupils	3–11		Leicester LE5 3HH
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0116 2624418
Number on roll (school)	353	Fax number	0116 2538230
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	John Lally
		Headteacher	Gerry Hirst
Date of previous school inspection	24 May 2001		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is larger than average. It is located near the centre of Leicester but pupils come here from a wide area covered by the parish. The majority of the pupils are from a wide range of ethnic heritages, the largest groups being from White European and Black Caribbean backgrounds. A significant minority are recent arrivals to this country and over a third of all the pupils receive support in learning English as a new language. The proportion of pupils entitled to receive free school meals is high. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is average. The number of pupils moving in and out of the school at times other than the start of Nursery and the end of Year 6 is very high.

The school is part of a Sure Start project which opened in 2006.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. Significant improvement is required in relation to: raising achievement and standards, and improving teaching, learning, leadership and management. This school is therefore given a notice to improve.

The school has a number of positive features but it is ineffective because too many pupils underachieve as a result of inadequate teaching in Years 3 to 6. By the end of Year 6 pupils are not sufficiently well prepared for secondary school.

Children make a good start in the Foundation Stage and achieve well because provision is good. Pupils with learning difficulties and those new to learning English make good progress because they are given good individual support. The pupils attain below average standards in Years 1 and 2 and achieve satisfactorily, although they could do better in mathematics. In Years 3 to 6, standards are average in English because support strategies have been effective in raising pupils' attainment. However, standards in mathematics and science are well below average, the pupils make unsatisfactory progress and they underachieve because teaching has many weaknesses.

Pupils' personal development is good. Most pupils attend regularly because they enjoy being at school. One parent said that her daughter loves the school so much that she hates arriving late. The school has worked hard to achieve a good work ethic in its pupils and pupils want to succeed because they understand why learning is important. A strong sense of calm and orderliness helps pupils feel safe and secure in school. New arrivals, particularly those new to the country, are welcomed warmly and, because the school is a rich tapestry of cultures and backgrounds, pupils are quick to befriend and look after each other. The school's strong Catholic ethos embraces diverse faiths and pupils learn to value differences well. Pupils understand the importance of taking care of themselves, for example low fat biscuits sell well in the 'healthy eating' tuck shop. A satisfactory curriculum supports pupils' personal development well through a good range of additional activities.

Teaching is inadequate, particularly in Years 3 to 6, because it does not stretch the pupils well enough and does not support effective learning. Improvement since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory. The school still does not use data effectively to set pupils challenging targets. While it provides good pastoral care and support, the academic guidance for pupils is unsatisfactory. Leadership and management are inadequate. Improvements have been slow to take effect and it is only since the reorganisation of the senior management team that inroads have been made in raising standards in English. This latter development, along with the effective work being carried out by the assistant headteachers, the checks taking place on the quality of teaching, and the good climate for learning that the school now promotes, is an indication that the school has the capacity to make further improvements.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise achievement and standards, particularly in mathematics and science.
- Improve teaching and learning, particularly in Years 3 to 6.
- Improve leadership and management to ensure all pupils progress as well as they should throughout the school.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

By the time they leave school, the standards pupils attain are mainly either below or well below average and they underachieve. In the Foundation Stage, most children start with skills and knowledge that are well below the expected levels in all the areas of learning. However, they settle quickly and through good provision they progress well, many reaching the levels expected of children aged five. In Years 1 and 2, progress is slower because pupils are not always challenged fully. Their achievement is satisfactory. Standards are rising slowly but are below average in reading, writing and mathematics, with mathematics remaining the weakest area.

In the national tests for Year 6 in 2006, the school failed to reach all its targets, but standards in English improved significantly and were only marginally above average. Intensive support has been instrumental in raising pupils' achievement in literacy. Pupils' standards in science and mathematics are well below average and their achievement is inadequate. While the overall trend since the last inspection shows the gap against national outcomes is slowly narrowing, standards are not rising quickly enough. Teaching in these subjects is inadequate, and is the main factor in the pupils' underachievement.

Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities and those new to English achieve well throughout the school because their needs are carefully identified and met.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good. The school's strong Catholic ethos underpins the pupils' spiritual development as they learn to respect each other's values and beliefs and adopt a good level of tolerance to differences. They appreciate the cultural diversity in the school and beyond through working with members of the community and taking part in social and cultural events and performances. Pupils show concern for others, for example by raising funds for charities. Older pupils, the 'yellow caps', foster secure friendships as they help younger children. Pupils look out for each other when difficulties arise and get on together well in group activities. Those new to the school settle quickly because relationships are good. Pupils say the school is a friendly place where bullying is almost non-existent. They enjoy school despite levels of attendance being slightly lower than the national average.

Pupils understand what constitutes healthy and safe lifestyles. For example, school council members monitor the 'healthiness' of food they sell in the tuck shop and many pupils take exercise in the sporting clubs on offer. Older pupils talk enthusiastically of the activities they undertook with representatives of the local football clubs. Participation in events in school and beyond encourages teamwork and pupils make positive contributions to the local and wider community.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 4

Inadequate teaching and learning result in pupils' overall underachievement. While individual lessons are satisfactory and sometimes good, the teaching, particularly in Years 3 to 6, lacks pace and work is not always well matched to pupils' needs or capabilities. Senior managers collect helpful assessment information to guide target setting, but some teachers make inadequate use of this when planning work tasks and activities that ensure pupils make satisfactory gains. Most pupils are keen to work hard and succeed, behaving well even when they find it hard to engage fully in lessons, but they are not stretched enough. For example, pupils in Year 6 spend too much time on low level tasks, such as colouring and copying texts, rather than extending their skills through independent work and research. Pupils have too few opportunities to take greater responsibility for their learning by being involved in evaluating their work and considering how they could improve. In the Foundation Stage, teachers use assessment information effectively to inform their planning and drive learning so that children make good gains.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory overall and good in the Foundation Stage. Here, topics that are relevant and appropriate to the children's experience ensure they make a good start and achieve well. The introduction of a number of improvement strategies, for example the Intensifying Support Programme, has raised pupils' attainment in English and the 'Philosophy Project' has reduced behaviour incidents because the pupils discuss their feelings and emotions more confidently. However, pupils have few opportunities to practise their basic skills through other subjects and the school is only at a very early stage of linking work across subjects to promote more creative approaches to teaching and learning. The provision for information and communication technology is satisfactory but resources in classrooms to support individual learning are limited. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities and those new to English receive good support and achieve well.

Pupils enjoy many additional activities. Visits and visitors, for example sports coaches, help pupils experience the wider world. Clubs and activities, particularly for pupils in

Years 3 to 6, are very popular and support their personal, social and health development well.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The school provides satisfactory support to its pupils but there are weaknesses in its academic guidance. Pastoral care is good. The school's procedures for ensuring pupils' safety and welfare are well documented and understood by staff. Pupils feel safe and know that there is someone they can turn to if they have concerns. Pupils with learning difficulties achieve well because their targets are carefully pursued through good individual support. The work of a learning mentor has proved beneficial to those pupils who join the school with limited English. These pupils settle in quickly, gain a good sense of belonging and progress well. The school seeks specialist expertise from external agencies where necessary. Parents agree that their children are cared for well.

Although the school has the facility to track pupils' progress closely, there is still considerable underachievement because this information is not used well by all staff. Not all pupils reach their academic targets. Teachers' marking is inconsistent and does not always provide pupils with sufficient guidance about how to improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 4

Leadership and management are inadequate because many pupils fail to make the progress they are capable of to achieve high enough standards. The school has introduced initiatives to improve the quality of education and raise standards and the improved 2006 national tests results in English provide good evidence that these initiatives are working. But improvements have been too slow to take effect in mathematics and science. Not all pupils learn as well as they can to reach challenging targets successfully. The school provides unsatisfactory value for money.

Through the self-evaluation measures, the headteacher and staff are aware of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Recent reorganisation of the senior management team has led to greater focus and drive towards raising standards. The assistant headteachers in particular are pursuing developments more rigorously and have the capacity to make further improvements. Pupils' performance is monitored and the quality of teaching checked, although this is not robust enough to ensure the pupils' higher achievement. Parents are very positive about what the school provides and say that their children are happy here.

Governance is satisfactory. While governors are very supportive of the school, they do not always hold the school sufficiently to account, particularly with regard to raising standards.

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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?	4
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
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	No

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4
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	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	4
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

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?	4
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	4
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	4
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?	Yes

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for welcoming us in your school and for talking to us. I am writing to tell you what we found out from our visit. We came to look at the work that you do and to talk to you and your teachers. We enjoyed meeting you and thought you were very friendly and polite. We would also like to thank your parents for filling in a form that gave us their views about the school. It was good to see that they are pleased with the school and feel that you are well looked after there. It was particularly interesting listening to you talk about the healthy options you offer in your tuck shop and which biscuits are good for me! We found out many interesting things about your school in the short time we had there. These are:

- You like school and many of you are very good in attending every day.
- You like your teachers and other helpers and always try to do your best.
- You are kind to each other and help each other whenever necessary.
- You are learning to become fit and healthy.
- Your teachers organise interesting clubs and trips for you to take part in.

While these are some of the good things, we think there are some things that the school could do even better. We have suggested:

- The standards you reach, particularly in mathematics and science, should be higher.
- Your teachers, particularly in Years 3 to 6, should give you harder work so that you learn even more.
- The headteacher and all staff must make sure that you all do as well as you can.

We are sure you can do really well if you receive this help. We hope you continue to work hard and have fun at school.