

Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	134479
Local Authority	Manchester
Inspection number	300614
Inspection dates	19–20 March 2007
Reporting inspector	Arthur Markham

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	230
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr K Strath
Headteacher	Mrs Marilyn Keefe
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Knutsford Road Gorton Manchester M18 7HS
Telephone number	0161 2230231
Fax number	0161 2318305

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This average sized school is part of the North East Manchester Excellence in Cities Action Zone and serves an area of significant social deprivation. It opened in April 2006 after the amalgamation of the Sacred Heart Infant and Junior schools. The percentage of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is similar to that in most schools and few are in the early stages of learning English. Nearly half of the pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is well above average. A larger than usual proportion of the pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Children's levels of attainment on entry to the Nursery are low.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This newly created school is providing a satisfactory quality of education for its pupils. Parents rate it highly and appreciate the good level of pastoral care provided for their children. Comments such as, 'The school is a very caring place with dedicated staff who work hard to bring out the best in the children.' typify the views of parents. Pupils' personal development is good. They show increasing maturity as they go through the school. They enjoy good relationships with their teachers and respond by behaving well. They are polite, courteous and show respect for others. Pupils enjoy the wide range of extra-curricular activities presented to them and in particular the good opportunities for sport, which help them to be active and healthy. The recent introduction of a school council is enabling pupils to be involved in school life and make a positive contribution to their own and to the wider community. Their good interpersonal skills and developing basic skills, prepare them satisfactorily for the next stage in their learning.

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory and sometimes good and a satisfactory range of learning experiences motivates pupils. However, teaching quality is inconsistent in Years 1 to 6 leading to some lack of challenge for more able pupils, though all teachers work hard to make learning enjoyable. Provision in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory. A good balance between taught and independent activities helps children to develop effective learning habits, but few reach the standards expected nationally by the time they start Year 1. In Years 1 to 6 pupils make satisfactory progress overall, but standards are still below average by the end of Year 6. Standards in writing are not as high as those in reading and mathematics. Action is being taken to remedy this and the standards of the current pupils are rising, but the impact is yet to be seen in results in national tests. Considering the low level skills many pupils have when they start school, the standards they reach represent satisfactory achievement. The school is developing procedures to check pupils' progress but targets are not yet used effectively to help pupils understand what they must do to improve. Nor is pupils' performance analysed effectively to identify those who are underachieving.

The headteacher has made a good start to creating a team approach since the amalgamation of the two schools. The staff share her commitment to improving the quality of education for the pupils. School self-evaluation procedures are at an early stage of development and there has been little monitoring of the quality of teaching so far. The school has a reasonably accurate view of its performance but over-estimated the quality of the academic guidance it gives to pupils. The governors' monitoring role is not well developed, which limits their capacity to challenge the school, but they do provide satisfactory support. The school provides satisfactory value for money. Taking into account the determination shown by the headteacher, staff and governors to make the amalgamation a success, the capacity for further improvement is satisfactory.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in writing.
- Improve the overall quality and consistency of teaching throughout the school.
- Ensure that teaching and learning are closely monitored in order to provide a more precise picture of how well pupils make progress and to identify any underachievement.
- Improve target-setting procedures so that all pupils, and especially more able pupils, understand what they need to do to improve further.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Achievement is satisfactory. Children enter the Nursery with skills that are low for their age, particularly in language and literacy. They make reasonable progress, but by the time they enter Year 1 standards are still well below average. Most pupils continue to make steady progress throughout Years 1 to 6, but the most able pupils do not always make as much progress as they should. In 2006 performance in national tests by the end of Year 6 was well below average. The initiatives introduced to redress the areas of weakness identified in pupils' performance are starting to have an impact, although the standards being attained by the current Year 6 pupils are still below average. The weakest aspect is writing, as a result of the difficulties many pupils have of expressing their ideas using correct grammar and punctuation. The reasonably challenging targets set by the school are likely to be met this year.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils make good progress in their personal development because teachers work hard to ensure that the school has a happy and secure atmosphere. They say they like school because teachers are kind. Their behaviour is good and they are keen to learn. They develop increasing confidence as they progress through the school. They work together well on shared tasks in lessons and older pupils benefit from a residential visit to help foster independence and self-esteem. Pupils take on responsibilities enthusiastically. For example, the recently introduced school council represent their classmates well, have assisted in headteacher interviews and are developing plans for a friendship wall to help those who may be feeling lonely or sad. Pupils know how to stay safe, fit and healthy from their good work in the healthy school programme.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They clearly know the difference between right and wrong and form good relationships with adults and other pupils that are firmly based on respect for all. They have a growing understanding of racial equality and are given opportunities to talk about their feelings. Attendance is just below average.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. While there is some good teaching, this is not consistent across the school. Some lessons lack variety of activity and pace, with the result that pupils are not sufficiently challenged, particularly the most able. However, most lessons are well planned and effective use is made of resources. Learning is made more interesting for pupils by the teachers' use of the recently introduced interactive whiteboards. Supportive comments are used well to develop pupils' self-esteem and confidence. Pupils consequently like their teachers and work hard in lessons. They respond enthusiastically when asked to discuss their work in groups and are eager to answer questions. Teaching assistants work well in partnership with teachers and support pupils with additional learning needs effectively. Assessment procedures are satisfactory. Teachers mark pupils' work regularly but not enough use is made of developmental comments to help them understand how they could improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory with some good features. It meets the needs of the majority of learners, but does not always ensure that the more able pupils are suitably challenged. Close attention is given to the basic skills in literacy and numeracy and links between subjects are starting to be made in order to make learning more relevant for pupils. Provision in the Foundation Stage ensures that children are presented with many interesting and challenging ways for them to learn. Events such as Book Week add a creative element. The curriculum supports pupils' personal development well. Pupils are given opportunities to work together, reflect and to express their feelings. The school's achievement of the Healthy Schools Award is reflected in the pupils' awareness of the need for healthy lifestyles, which is supported well through physical activities. A range of educational visits, contributions from visitors to school and out of school activities enrich the curriculum.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The quality of care, guidance and support is satisfactory with some good features. Staff are very caring and provide good pastoral support to pupils. Effective work with parents and other agencies enable vulnerable children and those with additional learning needs to receive the help they need and to make satisfactory progress. Child protection and health and safety procedures are in place. The good health education on offer helps the pupils make healthy lifestyle choices. Pupils say they feel safe and well cared for and are confident that there is someone they could go to if they were worried or had problems. They are well prepared for starting school and effective arrangements for the pupils' transfer to the next stage of their schooling ensures that this happens smoothly. Academic guidance is insufficient. Pupils are not set individual targets, so they do not know how to improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher, well supported by the two enthusiastic deputy headteachers, is working hard to create a team approach within the newly formed school. Her very caring approach presents a good role model for staff. Systems are beginning to be put in place to ensure that the school runs smoothly. There is a determined approach to improving the progress made by pupils and raising their achievement. However, monitoring and evaluation procedures are not yet well organised. For example, subject coordinators have not been given enough opportunities to observe lessons in order to identify areas for development. In addition, whilst pupils' progress is monitored, results are not analysed well enough to identify clearly why particular pupils are underachieving. Governors fulfil their responsibilities satisfactorily, but are not actively involved in school development planning or rigorous school self-review and therefore do not focus strongly enough on evaluating the impact of measures to improve pupils' progress.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	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?	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	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ 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

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	3
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?	3
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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Inspection of Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School, Manchester, M18 7HS

Thank you for being so friendly. We very much enjoyed being in your school and listening to what you had to say. We decided that Sacred Heart Catholic Primary is a satisfactory school. We particularly liked the warm and friendly atmosphere and the way the staff take good care of you so that you feel safe and happy. You clearly enjoy learning and being at school. We were also pleased to see how well you behave in lessons and around the school and how older pupils take care of the younger ones. Your awareness of the importance of a healthy diet and how to keep fit and healthy was clearly evident when we talked to some of you at lunchtime.

Teachers work hard to make learning interesting and you make steady progress. Many of you get to the standards that we expect, but we think that some of you could do even better. We especially like the way your teachers work so hard to help you with sports and musical activities. Most importantly, your headteacher and all of the staff are working to make your school better for you.

The headteacher, staff and governors are keen to make Sacred Heart a good school. They have already done a lot since the amalgamation of the infant and junior schools. We have asked them to help you improve your writing and make sure that you understand what you need to do to improve by setting you individual targets. We have also asked them to keep checking on the work of the school to determine what needs improving and work hard to ensure that all the teaching is lively and stimulating so that you really enjoy your learning and make even better progress.

Thank you for helping us so much with the inspection of your school. I hope that you will continue to work hard in school and help the teachers so that Sacred Heart Catholic Primary becomes an even better school.