

Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School, Sowerby Bridge

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	107558
Local Authority	Calderdale
Inspection number	309431
Inspection date	3 April 2008
Reporting inspector	Ann Sharpe

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	145
School	
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dr Malcolm Henry
Headteacher	Mrs M Whitworth
Date of previous school inspection	1 November 2004
School address	St Peter's Avenue Sowerby Bridge West Yorkshire HX6 1BL
Telephone number	01422 831360
Fax number	0

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector. The inspector investigated the effectiveness of the Foundation Stage, pupils' achievement, pupils' personal development and well-being, the curriculum and other activities, and care, guidance and support. Evidence was gathered from the school's self-evaluation, plans for further improvement, nationally published data and the school's own records of pupils' progress. Brief observations of lessons in all classes were undertaken. Discussions were held with staff, pupils and governors. Questionnaires returned by parents were considered. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in as much detail, and the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified. These have been included, where appropriate, in this report.

Description of the school

Almost all the pupils at this smaller than average sized school are White British. The number of pupils joining the school partway through this stage of their education is increasing, and the skills of children starting in Reception are not as advanced as at the previous inspection. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is broadly average, as is the proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The headteacher was appointed in February 2007. The school holds the Healthy Schools, Activemark and Investors in People awards.

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 Catholic Primary is a good school, providing good value for money. It is a very happy and purposeful school that is thought of highly by pupils, parents and carers. Pupils say how much they enjoy all aspects of school life, especially making friends. They get along very well together, and the warm relationships between staff and pupils make a vital contribution to pupils' good personal development and well-being. Pupils become increasingly mature, sensible and thoughtful, so that by Year 6, they love making a contribution to their school community. The school's strong commitment to caring for pupils as individuals shows in the efforts made by staff to ensure that their varying needs are understood and provided for. Consequently, pupils feel safe, know who to go to for help and receive good support whenever they need it. Pupils' behaviour in lessons is outstanding, and they have a very keen sense of right and wrong. Their outstanding understanding of how to stay safe and to live healthy lifestyles shows in their eager and confident answers to questions about healthy eating, and in their enjoyment of energetic exercise indoors and outdoors.

As a result of the fresh impetus and extremely clear direction of the new headteacher, the school has come through the challenges posed by staff changes, financial and other uncertainties. Standards by Year 6 have improved much faster than the national trend in recent years, and they are above average. Pupils' achievement, including pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, is good. This is because of overall good teaching and learning and an enriching curriculum. Pupils' rapid progress in upper Key Stage 2 is the result of the dedicated and enthusiastic leadership of the coordinator, high expectations of pupils and inspirational teaching. Pupils currently in Year 6 are on track to meet the challenging targets set for the 2008 tests. They are well prepared for going to secondary school because of their eagerness to learn basic literacy and numeracy skills, and their enjoyment of mental challenges.

The progress of pupils in Key Stage 1 has been slower, and results of the Year 2 national assessments have taken a downward trend in recent years. Although staff are taking action to put this right, predicted assessments for 2008 suggest very little improvement in writing and mathematics. This partly reflects the changing context of the school. Those pupils who have not had a change of school often do quite well, especially in reading. Nevertheless, some pupils, including the more able, should achieve more than they do.

Leadership and management are good. Although the school's evaluations of itself are sometimes generous, this is a school that knows its own strengths and is not afraid to say where it needs to improve. Governors now know the school better than previously, and are very supportive. Their role as 'critical friends', however, is not as well developed. This means that they do not always hold the school fully to account. For example, by making certain that standards by Year 2 are improving and ensuring that spending on up-to-date technology tackles the weaknesses in information and communication technology (ICT) found at the previous two inspections. Nevertheless, the school is now well placed to continue to improve in the future. There is a strong sense of teamwork, good partnerships with others and a renewed enthusiasm for taking the school forward.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

When children start in Reception, their skills are below those typical for their age. They make satisfactory progress in communication, language and literacy and in mathematical development. In personal, social and emotional development, however, children make good progress. By the time children are ready to start Year 1 however, their skills remain below national expectations.

Children quickly settle into school, enjoy their activities, behave very well and are confident to work alongside Year 1 pupils. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Caring staff work together closely in order to make children's learning purposeful and fun. Children love the excitement of activities, such as pretending to wear 'magic trainers' and then talking about going on imaginary journeys. They choose happily to play indoors or outdoors, listen carefully to adults and other children and take part in formal learning. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The coordinator is responding positively to national guidance about provision, but there is further work to do. Middle leader training is currently supporting improvement. The school has collected a lot of important and useful information about children's attainment. However, staff have yet to use it to find out how good children's progress is and to evaluate standards by the end of Reception.

What the school should do to improve further

- Quicken the pace of learning and progress of children in the Foundation Stage and of pupils in Key Stage 1, so that pupils of all ages always achieve as well as they can.
- Extend the role of governors as 'critical friends', so that staff feel challenged to make sure that pupils' achievement across the school is always as good as it can be.

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Annex A

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
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	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	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.

Annex A

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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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	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**

Thank you very much for making me feel so welcome when I visited your school. You were all very friendly and I thoroughly enjoyed talking to you. You answered all my questions so thoughtfully and sensibly, and I was impressed with how polite you were. Your behaviour is excellent, especially in lessons.

Your school is a good school. Your teachers and all the other adults who work with you care about you a great deal and want you to do well. They help you to learn how to stay safe and healthy and give you lots of chances to join many different kinds of clubs. The school council is coming along very well, and I was able to see how you all help to make sure that no one feels left out or unhappy at school. It is easy to understand why you say that you enjoy coming so much.

Your new headteacher has made a big difference to your school, and it is not surprising that your parents are very pleased with how well things are improving.

The Year 6 national test results have improved faster than in most other schools because older pupils learn very quickly indeed. Younger pupils often do well, but there are times when they could do better. This is why I have asked the school to make sure that you all learn just as quickly, no matter how old you are.

The school governors also care about you. They know a lot about your school and want to keep on making it better for you. They put a lot of trust in your headteacher to make sure that everything is as good as it should be, but do not check enough for themselves by asking questions and setting hard targets. This is why I have asked governors to do more to check that you are all doing as well as you possibly can.

You can help by continuing to try your best in everything that you do.

Thank you again for a very enjoyable day.