

Sacred Heart RC Voluntary Aided Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108393
Local Authority	Gateshead
Inspection number	309680
Inspection dates	17–18 October 2007
Reporting inspector	Moira Fitzpatrick

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	96
School	
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Peter Williams
Headteacher	Mr Denis Godfrey
Date of previous school inspection	1 March 2003
School address	Byermoor Burnopfield Newcastle upon Tyne Tyne and Wear NE16 6NU
Telephone number	01207 270396
Fax number	01207 272604

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a small school set in a semi-rural area. The number of pupils in each cohort can vary widely from year to year. Nearly all pupils are from a White British background. The percentage entitled to free school meals is below average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average and no pupil has a statement of special educational need.

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's effectiveness is satisfactory. There are significant strengths in pupils' personal development which is good overall. Pupils' spiritual and moral development is outstanding. Another strength is in the school's very good care of its pupils. Parents are happy with what the school offers and rightly believe that teachers care well for their children. The school's procedures for safeguarding and pupils' welfare are thorough and used well by all staff. Pupils enjoy school, as their excellent attendance testifies, and they are well prepared for the next stage of their education and the world of work. They form good relationships and make a good contribution to the improvement of the school. They know how to stay healthy and safe and willingly accept responsibilities to care for younger pupils or help their classrooms run smoothly.

Standards are above average in Year 2 and Year 6. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory because they make the expected progress from their starting points, but many could do even better. The performance of Year 2 and Year 6 pupils in national tests has been above average for the last three years, although no Year 6 pupil in 2007 reached the higher level in writing and the proportion reaching the higher level in mathematics was below the 2006 average. All pupils reached the expected level in reading and mathematics and science.

Teaching is satisfactory and there are some good features. For example, teachers communicate clearly and effectively with pupils. They expect pupils to work hard and they do because they have very good relationships with their teachers and want to please them. However, teachers do not make enough use of assessment to plan pupils' learning so that it is always sufficiently challenging. This means that pupils, especially the more able, do not always understand how to make the progress of which they are capable. The curriculum makes satisfactory provision for pupils' learning and there is good enrichment through the provision for visits, visitors, links with international schools and after-school clubs.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The school's view of its own effectiveness is only partially accurate because there is not enough rigorous monitoring by staff and governors of achievement and the quality of the provision. For this reason, the school's self-evaluation is satisfactory. The roles of the deputy headteacher and subject leaders are not well enough developed and they have too little understanding of their accountability for raising standards. At present, too many tasks and responsibilities fall to the headteacher who is well supported by staff in the excellent lead he gives to pupils' personal and spiritual development. Changes to the governing body have brought an awareness of the need to develop the role of governors as critical friends who have a good knowledge of the school through regular monitoring of its work. Plans are in place to establish regular monitoring this term.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Provision in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory. Children join the Reception class with skills above those which are typical for their age. They make steady progress during their time in the Reception class and nearly all reach or exceed the expected level by the end of the year. The curriculum is planned to give a balance of adult-led and child-directed learning. This helps children to develop good levels of confidence and independence. Outdoor provision has improved since the last inspection, but more opportunities need to be created to foster children's outdoor learning. The school rightly places strong emphasis on children's personal, social and emotional

development and they make good progress in these skills. Progress is slower in developing early reading skills. Teaching is satisfactory with good use of assessment so that tasks are well matched to children's stage of development. The temporary teacher, ably supported by the established teaching assistant, has ensured that the children's start to their education has been a happy one through well organised routines and warm, supportive relationships.

What the school should do to improve further

- Increase the proportion of pupils reaching the higher level at the end of Year 6, especially in writing and mathematics.
- Improve the use of assessment to accelerate pupils' progress.
- Improve the contribution of governors and leaders to the school's self-evaluation and raising standards

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next Section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Standards are above average and pupils' achievement is satisfactory. At the end of Reception, almost all children have reached or exceeded the levels expected. From this strong base, pupils make satisfactory progress in Years 1 and 2. In national assessments in 2006, Year 2 pupils' performance was above average overall in reading, writing and mathematics. Results of national tests in 2006 for Year 6 pupils were above average in science and mathematics and average in English. The pupils who took these tests had made satisfactory progress from their starting points in Year 3. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities made similar progress to others and achieved the expected level in mathematics and science, though not in English. Results in the 2007 national tests show a decline in the proportion of pupils reaching the higher level in English and mathematics with no pupil reaching the higher level in writing. Given their starting points, more pupils should exceed the expected levels by Year 6 in these subjects.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good overall. Because of the headteacher's very strong emphasis on pupils' spiritual and moral development, these aspects are outstanding. Pupils have a very well developed sense of their own value and that of others. This is seen in their good behaviour, the high levels of respect and care that they show for each other and in their understanding of the needs of those not as fortunate as themselves. Pupils enjoy school as their excellent attendance testifies. They say they feel safe and secure and they are undoubtedly happy in and out of the classroom. They learn to be independent from the time they start school and quickly develop an enthusiasm for improving the school and taking on responsibilities. Through the school council they have achieved some very good improvements to playground facilities, making playtimes very active and interesting. Pupils understand the need for healthy eating and for taking plenty of exercise. Their good basic skills and personal qualities prepare them well for the future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. During the inspection some good teaching was seen, but this is not sustained well enough to ensure that pupils make good progress over time. Teachers have very good relationships with pupils and expect them to work hard, and this they do. Teachers give clear explanations and make good use of resources to ensure that pupils can work independently at their tasks. Pupils enjoy this aspect of their work and concentrate well. Although lessons are planned to match tasks to pupils' needs, sometimes teachers could expect more of their pupils, especially the more able. The use of assessment is not well enough developed to allow teachers to spot quickly when a pupil is ready to move on and this is the reason that progress is satisfactory rather than good over time. When marking work, teachers make positive comments about pupils' efforts, but they do not give enough feedback on what needs to improve so that pupils can progress towards their targets more quickly.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory and meets requirements. Some aspects are good, especially the enrichment through visits, visitors, links with international schools and the after-school activities. The curriculum adequately meets the needs and interests of most pupils, although the more able pupils would benefit from higher levels of challenge. Planning for literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology is adequate. The programme for personal, social and health education encourages pupils to stay healthy and teaches them about personal safety effectively. The time allocated for physical education is less than recommended which weakens the provision for promoting healthy living.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school provides very good care and pastoral support and guidance for pupils. Staff form good relationships with pupils and provide a safe, secure environment within which they can thrive. Pupils say they feel safe and happy in school and know who to ask for advice if they are troubled. The youngest pupils feel well supported by their older buddies who look after them in the playground. The impact of this provision is seen in pupils' good personal development and their excellent spiritual and moral development. Suitable arrangements for safeguarding, child protection and health and safety are in place.

Academic guidance is satisfactory. While teachers make termly assessments of pupils' progress, they do not make enough use of daily assessments to set work which challenges pupils to make the best possible progress. Pupils are beginning to assess their own and others' work but, at present, they do not have a good understanding of how well they are doing. The few pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are given adequate support to help them make progress towards their individual targets. However, teachers are not sufficiently involved in either writing individual education plans for these pupils or in monitoring their progress towards their targets. This has given rise to some justifiable concerns by parents about the information they receive on their children's progress.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. Parents are highly supportive of the school. They value its strong caring ethos and the way their children are taught to care for and support each other. The headteacher provides an excellent lead for the spiritual and moral development of pupils which staff support well. However, since the last inspection, the roles of the deputy headteacher and subject leaders have not developed sufficiently. Whilst school self-evaluation is satisfactory overall, it has nonetheless led the school to an over-optimistic view of its effectiveness. Senior staff and subject leaders have not been held accountable enough for standards and the quality of provision in the school. Consequently, their expectations of what they should contribute to school improvement are not high enough and too many tasks are undertaken by the headteacher alone. Where changes and a course of action are agreed, they are not always implemented with sufficient urgency, nor is their effectiveness monitored rigorously enough. Because of this, progress since the last inspection has only been satisfactory. Recent changes to the governing body have resulted in a greater awareness of the need to develop the role of governors in holding the school to account. The school's capacity to improve further is satisfactory.

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?	3
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?	3
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
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	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	1
The behaviour of learners	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?	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?	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?	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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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

19 October 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Sacred Heart RC Voluntary Aided Primary School, Gateshead, NE16 6NU

Thank you for your friendly welcome when we visited your school recently. It was very clear that you enjoy coming to school and that you feel safe and happy there. You make good friends and look after each other and you also behave really well in the classroom and in the playground. You are right to feel proud of the improvements you have made to the playground; everyone has such a lovely time with the new toys and games. You do a lot for other people to make their lives better by raising money or sending them special gifts at Christmas. Your school is helping you to be kind, responsible and hard working so that you will be good citizens in the future.

You told us that your teachers look after you very well and that you enjoy lessons because you know what you have to do and always get help when you need it. Some of you said you thought the work could be a little harder and we agree. Your teachers are going to look at your work to see that it is challenging you to do your best and also to tell you how well you are doing and how to improve. They are also going to find out what is working really well in school and how it can be made even better. We know you work hard and if you keep on doing that you will help your school get even better.

Our very best wishes to you for the future.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Moira Fitzpatrick and Mr Nicholas Rudman

Additional Inspectors