

# Sacred Heart Catholic High School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	108536
<b>Local Authority</b>	Newcastle upon Tyne
<b>Inspection number</b>	309721
<b>Inspection dates</b>	20–21 November 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Tom Grieveson HMI

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>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Girls
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	1359
6th form	240
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Denise Kendall
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Pat Wager
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 May 2004
<b>School address</b>	Fenham Hall Drive Fenham Newcastle upon Tyne Tyne and Wear NE4 9YH
<b>Telephone number</b>	0191 2747373
<b>Fax number</b>	0191 2751939

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Sacred Heart Catholic High School is a larger than average sized and very popular 11 to 18 Roman Catholic High School for girls. The school population is stable and the school receives too many applications for the number of available places. While a higher proportion of students live in the wards nearest to the school, a significant proportion travel from other areas of Newcastle and beyond the city. The percentage of students who are entitled to free school meals is slightly above average but is falling. The proportion of students attending from minority ethnic communities is less than average but is increasing while the proportion of students who have English as an additional language is above average. The percentage of students who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is one third of the national average and the proportion of students who have a statement of special educational needs is low. The school holds specialist technology college status, has a second specialism in performing arts and a third specialism for Leading Edge. Sacred Heart School has been designated a 'high performing specialist school' and has had membership of the specialist schools and academies trust 'most improved schools club' since 2005.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 1

Sacred Heart Catholic High School provides its students with an outstanding education, enabling the overwhelming majority to make excellent progress in their learning and achieve high standards. The school's Catholic mission and ethos permeates all aspects of its work and provides students with a secure and purposeful environment within which to learn and develop.

The school's headteacher, senior leaders, governors and staff demonstrate exceptional professionalism and high ambition in the pursuit of academic excellence. Collectively, they enjoy the resounding confidence of those parents and students who made their views known to the inspection team. All areas for improvement identified in the last inspection report have been tackled successfully and the school has excellent capacity to improve further. The school's specialist provision makes a significant contribution to the performance of the school and the lives of its students.

When students enter the school their attainment is slightly above average overall although this reflects a very wide spread of ability. The standards achieved by students have been significantly higher than average over time at each key stage and these have improved further in 2007. This has occurred because students make excellent progress in their learning and achieve in line with their challenging targets. Those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive highly effective support and this ensures the progress these students make is proportionate to the wider cohort.

Teaching and learning are excellent. Teachers understand the learning needs of students in great detail through the school's very effective tracking procedures. Lessons are designed effectively to make learning relevant and interesting; activities cater well for students of all abilities. Students enjoy the challenge which lessons provide and this contributes substantially to the progress which they make. Work is regularly marked and in the large majority of cases, although not all, students receive clear written feedback about how to improve and achieve their targets. Students have access to an excellent curriculum and this provides outstanding support to their academic and personal development. In addition, the personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE) programme, including religious education provision, tutor time and assemblies, is very well coordinated and is of great benefit to the students.

Students' outstanding personal development is evident in their exemplary attitudes and commitment to their studies. Excellent behaviour and a consideration for others typifies their conduct and demeanour. Students enjoy their work and demonstrate both a keenness to learn and a strong desire to succeed. The large majority are confident and secure in the positive and supportive environment afforded by the school. Staff provide an exceptionally high level of care and are very effective in securing the welfare of students and their safety. Academic and pastoral guidance are significant strengths and these factors combine powerfully to provide an outstanding context within which students thrive.

## Effectiveness of the sixth form

### Grade: 1

This is an outstanding and highly inclusive sixth form. Currently, 88% of Year 11 students stay on in the sixth form because it accommodates all abilities through a flexible curriculum which is effective in meeting their needs. Students receive very good guidance which provides them with a smooth transition from Key Stage 4. Course choices are well informed and well suited

to their interests and aspirations. Comprehensive and well managed links with other educational and workplace providers ensure that students are guided appropriately towards making decisions which will support their future economic well-being. The excellent leadership of the sixth form has contributed substantially to a further improvement in overall standards. Provisional results in advanced level courses in 2007 are high and reflect a further marked improvement on previous years. Given their starting points, the large majority of students make excellent progress. Performance information is used effectively to monitor students' achievement and to intervene with support when they encounter difficulties. This support is highly effective and ensures that problems are overcome. Students' personal development and well-being in the sixth form are outstanding. Their attitudes and behaviour are exemplary and they are very good role models for younger students. They follow a very effective PSHCE programme which supports them in their academic study. Students state they are given many opportunities to support the school and the local and wider community through, for example, the active Justice and Peace group, charity fund raising, 'Pink Week' and sponsoring an orphan in Romania. However they feel additional opportunities for work experience would enhance their development further. The excellent teaching and learning is enhanced through the very positive relationships between staff and students. In the best lessons work is clearly differentiated to the needs of the students and is based on their previous knowledge and understanding. These lessons are also characterised by a brisk pace and a focus on how students can improve in their work. The students speak warmly of their time in the sixth form and describe it as a stepping stone between school and university. They are confident, articulate, and responsible young people.

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

- Improve the quality and consistency of marking to support students in understanding what they are required to do to improve.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 1**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 1**

When students enter the school their attainment varies substantially although overall it is just above average. The large majority of students, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, make excellent progress in their learning and achieve at least in line with their targets and capabilities. Consequently, a considerable and increasing proportion of students reach standards which are substantially higher than seen nationally and this lays a secure foundation for their future education and employment.

At Key Stage 3, standards in English, mathematics and science have been significantly above average over time. Provisional results for 2007 indicate that students attained grades above those reached in the previous year. They performed particularly well in English although high scores were also achieved in mathematics and science.

Standards at Key Stage 4 remain substantially above average with further significant improvement evident in 2007. The proportion of students achieving age appropriate levels in their GCSE examinations (5 A\*-C) increased by eight percent to 80% in 2007. Sixty two percent of students achieved this level when English and mathematics are included, a 12% increase which is also substantially above average. In addition, all students in 2007 achieved at least 1 A\* - G GCSE grade qualification.

## Personal development and well-being

**Grade: 1**

**Grade for sixth form: 1**

All aspects of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are outstanding and underpinned by the strong pastoral support which permeates all aspects of school life and from which students derive great benefit. Students say they feel safe in school and express great confidence in staff, knowing that help is available when required. Their behaviour in lessons and around school is excellent. Students are respectful of staff and each other and demonstrate exemplary attitudes towards their studies. The large majority clearly enjoy coming to school. Consequently, attendance rates are very high and temporary exclusions rates are low. There were no permanent exclusions during the last academic year.

Students have many opportunities to take responsibility and contribute to school life and the wider community. The school council is active for example in providing feedback to staff about what makes a good lesson and has seen teachers respond to their ideas. Students run drama workshops for primary school pupils; are active through the work of the 'Saint Vincent de Paul' group; and they run regular 'Fair Trade' stalls. In addition, students have many opportunities to fund raise for charities of their choice. Many students derive great enjoyment and success from their participation in school choirs and through drama productions. Sixth form students engage in project work through visits to India, Kenya and Chile and through the 'Sacred Heart Network' enjoy annual exchange visits to schools in Scotland and Nova Scotia.

Students are well prepared for the world of work and benefit substantially through events which develops their financial awareness and from the very effective PSHCE programme. Students gain from the wide range of activities that promotes a healthy lifestyle, including extra-curricular physical education and sport. All students profit well from the opportunities provided to explore and understand the multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and multi-faith world in which they live.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

**Grade: 1**

**Grade for sixth form: 1**

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding because much of it is good and a substantial proportion is excellent. This high quality of teaching enables students to achieve very well and attain high standards. Lessons observed during the inspection confirm the school's own view of its teaching and clearly demonstrates that the areas for improvement from the last inspection have been acted upon. Students in the school enjoy their work and are eager to achieve and improve. Relationships between students and staff are exceptionally positive and supportive. Consequently, students grow in confidence and increasingly take responsibility for their own progress as they move through the school. They appreciate the high quality of teaching they receive and are enthusiastic and hardworking learners.

Extensive, well-focused professional development and growing opportunities to share best practice underpin the quality of teaching. Teachers enjoy their work; they are very knowledgeable, plan lessons thoroughly, and make it clear what they want students to learn. The large majority of lessons include a good range of activities that provide appropriate challenge

and capture students' interest. In a small minority of cases however, teachers do not adequately cater as well as they might for the full range of abilities. Teachers use questioning effectively to help consolidate what students know, understand and can do. Knowledge and awareness of examination requirements are substantial strengths and support students very well in their achievements. Homework extends learning well and is regularly marked. The quality of marking overall is good but not all teachers provide students with sufficient guidance about how to improve their work. Students are increasingly involved in the assessment of their own work. Target setting is very well established and students have a secure understanding of how well they are doing. Systems for tracking students' progress are impressive and insightful because students who are falling behind are identified quickly and additional support is provided to help them improve.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 1**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 1**

The school offers outstanding curriculum provision and meets the needs of all learners. In Years 7 to 9, students enjoy a broad, well balanced experience that fully meets statutory requirements. Very effective support is provided for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Notable features at this stage include opportunities for drama and the emphasis given to modern foreign languages.

Provision in Years 10 and 11 is dynamic and evolving quickly. A wide range of GCSE courses is supplemented by an expanding range of vocational options. The school is responding very well to individual students' needs and aspirations through its flexible planning approach. Optional courses capture students' interests very well and allow for both choice and specialisation. A growing emphasis is given to vocational and work related opportunities, and to the alternative arrangements that cater for those students who are not well suited to a full GCSE programme. These are proving to be effective and popular; they are helping to raise standards and are providing students with important work related skills. In keeping with the school's specialisms, strong priority is given to technology subjects and to the performing arts. The overall impact is helping to raise standards, and is ensuring that all students are well prepared for their future education, training or employment.

Many students enjoy taking part in and benefit from a very wide range of extra-curricular activities, notably in sport and the arts. The well planned PSHCE programme, together with experience in careers, enterprise, and work experience, contribute very strongly to students' outstanding personal development, and boosts their positive attitudes to both learning and to school in general.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 1**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 1**

The care, guidance and support which students receive are outstanding. The caring work of the school, captured in the words of its foundress 'I would have done it all for just one child' ensures that all students, including the vulnerable, are well supported to maximise their achievements.

Students benefit from an extremely strong system of coordinated pastoral and academic support involving the school counsellor, school chaplain, parent support adviser, learning mentors and teaching staff. Their needs are met within a compassionate yet academically challenging atmosphere. Procedures for tracking students' progress are excellent. Feedback is clear and detailed and provides students with regular and accurate summaries of their performance and where improvement is required. Where necessary, additional help is provided to help them to tackle difficulties. Parents are particularly well informed and regularly consulted.

Safeguarding procedures are robust. The school takes its health and safety responsibilities, including all matters pertaining to risk assessment, very seriously and they are effectively managed. Their thorough procedures are shared with local primary schools, particularly those with respect to internet safety and security.

## **Leadership and management**

**Grade: 1**

**Grade for sixth form: 1**

The quality of the school's leadership and management is outstanding. The headteacher's leadership is exemplary. She is securely focused on raising the achievement and aspirations of all students within the context of the school's values and mission. The headteacher is ably supported by a skilled and talented team of senior staff. Collectively they are resolute in the pursuit of higher standards and in securing continual improvements to all aspects of the school's provision. In almost all departments leadership is highly effective, monitoring is rigorous. This is leading to improvements to teaching and learning and higher standards of achievement. The leadership's evaluation of the school's performance is clear and accurate. It provides an honest appraisal of its strengths and defines those areas requiring further improvement. Consequently, school improvement planning is precise. Targeted actions are focused directly on those aspects and departments which require improvement the most. Monitoring evidence is robust and clear ensuring that actions are accurately evaluated. Of particular note is the analysis and tracking of students' performance. Senior staff understand, in exacting detail, the performance of cohorts and individual students. Actions to support those identified as under-achieving are swiftly implemented and are effective in helping students to make progress. The school's financial procedures are maintained to an excellent standard. There is a rigour of practice which ensures full accountability and monitoring of spending decisions. Governors demonstrate a clear understanding of the school's performance across all aspects of its work. While they offer support and appreciation of the hard work and dedication of staff, they are forthright in holding them accountable for the school's performance. The school provides outstanding value for money.

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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	16-19
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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?	1	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1	1

### Achievement and standards

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

### Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	
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	1	
The behaviour of learners	1	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	

### The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	1

<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.

## Annex A

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	1	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	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**

27 November 2007

Dear Students

Inspection of Sacred Heart Catholic High School, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE4 9YH

Thank you for the welcome you gave the inspection team and myself when we visited your school recently to carry out the inspection. We are very grateful for the time you gave to answer our questions and particularly to the school council for sharing their views. The report is now complete and I would like to tell you what it contains.

I am delighted to inform you that Sacred Heart Catholic High School provides you with an outstanding education. In all aspects of its work the school's performance is excellent. Your headteacher, the governors and all the staff are doing an outstanding job in providing you with a very high standard of education.

You as students of the school also deserve credit. Your behaviour and attitudes and the commitment you demonstrate towards your studies are excellent. In our observations we were impressed with your maturity, keen sense of hard work and desire to succeed. In addition, the manner in which you take responsibility and engage in the activities and opportunities which the school offers is noteworthy. You are a credit to your school. Well done.

We have asked the school to concentrate on making one area of its work better. While we know that the large majority of teachers already mark your work extremely thoroughly we want all teachers to do this consistently so that you are provided with information which helps you to understand what you must do to improve and to make progress.

Thank you once again for your help and, on behalf of the inspection team, our very best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Tom Grieveson

Her Majesty's Inspector