

Sacred Heart RC Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110855
Local Authority	City of Peterborough
Inspection number	310442
Inspection date	7 October 2008
Reporting inspector	Roger Fry

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	198
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	29
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs R Norris
Headteacher	Ms A Togher
Date of previous school inspection	28 February 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Tollgate Bretton Peterborough Cambridgeshire PE3 9XD
Telephone number	01733 262449
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

The inspection evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: how effective the school has been in improving pupils' writing standards, particularly at Key Stage 1; how the school ensures that pupils from all groups make good progress; and what positive impact the ecological work and 'Food for Life' initiatives have had on pupils' lives. Evidence was gathered from observing lessons and pupils' work; scrutinising school documentation, parents' questionnaire responses, records of pupils' achievement and progress; and discussions with the headteacher, senior staff, governors and with pupils.

Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspection found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in the report.

Description of the school

Sacred Heart Voluntary Aided Primary School is slightly smaller than average in size. The school serves Bretton in Peterborough and also draws pupils widely from the surrounding area. The majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds and about a quarter of pupils are from other ethnic backgrounds. Virtually all speak English as their first language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational need, is average. The proportion of pupils known to qualify for a free school meal is below average.

There is Early Years Foundation Stage provision (EYFS). Children join the Reception class as they turn four years old and are educated full time in a modern classroom. The Reception class is part of the main school building and there are extensive outdoor facilities for them to use. Young children's attainment on entry to school is broadly typical of children nationally, although there has been a recent decline in children's personal and social development.

The school has gained the Activemark for sports provision. It is a 'Healthy School' and is seeking recognition as an 'Eco-School'.

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 provides a good education for its pupils. Aspects of pupils' personal development are outstanding, such as their great enjoyment of schooling and their excellent behaviour. Parents acknowledge how well their children are getting on. Typical of many parents' views is, 'The school works extremely hard to give all children a fully rounded education without neglecting the basics.'

The school has maintained its good performance since the last inspection. At the end of Year 6, pupils' standards of work in English, mathematics and science are consistently above average in national tests. The good performance of pupils over time is mainly the result of well-planned teaching and pupils' excellent attitudes to school.

Standards in writing have been slightly lower than in other subjects at Key Stage 1. This has occurred because the school emphasises the development of pupils' interest in writing, rather than challenging pupils to reach the higher than average level at this point in their development. Teachers, nevertheless, give proper attention to matters such as spelling, punctuation, and to the complexity of the sentences that pupils write. The success of the school's innovative approach to pupils' writing is evident from the good results they achieve at the end of Year 6. Their standards are above average at 11 years old and the great majority of pupils express their ideas clearly and tidily. They enjoy literacy lessons throughout Key Stage 2, work very hard and do their best.

Pupils from all groups make good progress because the school manages the identification of pupils' needs efficiently and then meets them. Those who find learning difficult, such as in reading or mathematics lessons, make good progress. Teachers and their assistants make sure that they have work that matches their needs in class lessons or that they receive extra programmes of lessons in small groups to help them learn faster. The success of the teaching means that most pupils with additional needs reach the expected national standards by the end of Year 6.

Before the start of the school day, selected pupils benefit from a programme of extra physical activities. There are effective programmes to help pupils who have difficulty getting going in the morning, concentrating well in lessons or who have limited hand-eye coordination. Pupils enjoy the activities, practise hard and do better in lessons as a result. All pupils are well cared for and staff and governors ensure that they are safe.

Sacred Heart is an inclusive school where all pupils have equal opportunities. Pupils from ethnic minority groups make similar progress to their peers. Half-termly assessments of pupils' work are accurate and help teachers to set work that takes them on to the next stage of learning. Teachers check the progress of groups and individuals carefully and are quick to change teaching programmes if any pupil or group is underachieving. Pupils from all backgrounds take an equal part in lessons. The needs of the few pupils who are learning English as an additional language are met. The school introduced a basic grammar programme to benefit this group, which in fact helped all pupils learn to construct English sentences more effectively.

The teaching is consistently good. Teachers set groups of differing abilities relevant and interesting targets to meet in each lesson and over the year. Teaching assistants are a strength of the school and support pupils' learning very well. They plan closely with teachers and fully engage pupils in their groups by using a series of questions and prompts to help them learn. Occasionally, teaching spends too long introducing learning points and explaining what pupils

have to do, and they lose concentration. The school has begun a programme of 'challenges' for the most able, which aims to provide stimulating questions for them to answer, such as, 'What are the seven wonders of the world?' Teachers have begun to encourage pupils to undertake independent research, and this is an area the school has planned to develop further.

The school places a considerable emphasis on developing pupils' understanding of ecology. Pupils learn, for example, about how human activity affects the world and pupils' moral and social awareness is greatly enhanced. Adults skilfully link this work with topics from the National Curriculum, in order to deepen pupils' understanding of ideas such as 'sustainable development'. There are key areas that support pupils' excellent personal development. The 'eco-council' helps to organise the programme of activities with great enthusiasm. Pupils learn to work independently, to do manual work, to co-operate together in pairs and in groups and to use a variety of tools safely. This work prepares pupils well for their next schools and future lives and gives fresh opportunities for the less academic pupils to shine.

The school has surveyed parents' opinions about the eco initiative. Nearly three quarters of parents who responded to a questionnaire said that they had made changes at home, such as by switching off unwanted lights and recycling more waste materials. Pairs of 'Power Rangers' regularly check the school's energy consumption. A prize is awarded to the class or room that wastes the least. The 'Food for Life' aspect is very successful. All classes have an area in which they can grow vegetables and fruits, many of which pupils eat at lunchtimes. They are learning about how things grow most successfully and about how to eat healthily.

The school meets its community responsibilities well. Pupils have many responsibilities within the school, which help it to run efficiently. The curriculum develops pupils' understanding of the world community in, for example, geography and religious education lessons. Global issues, such as hunger and the need for the rich to give to the poor, prompt many fund raising activities. The school is a major part of the local community and parish.

The headteacher provides excellent leadership, ably supported by senior staff. A key feature of the school's work is to embark on any new venture only after careful thought and planning, and then to ensure that the positive benefits become embedded in the school's day-to-day life. There is a clear vision and capacity to take all the staff together to support new initiatives. The school knows itself well, and its self-evaluation is accurate. This means that the school is always looking to evaluate the impacts of changes and decide whether they are worthwhile or not. The school is well placed to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children make good all-round progress because of good teaching. A significant proportion of children reach above average standards by the time they enter Year 1. A strong emphasis on teaching reading, writing and mathematics, together with generous time for improving children's personal and social development, are the main reasons why they do well. Children learn the names of letters and the sounds they make. This aspect is taught well and they quickly become familiar with them, because they are brought into daily language consistently. Children learn routines quickly and the great majority play well together and help one another.

A skilled team of teaching assistants capably supports children, especially those with a statement of special educational need. The exciting outdoor area has a myriad of captivating things for children to do, many on an environmental theme. Impressively, each child helps to grow vegetables for the kitchen to serve at lunchtimes to the whole school. Outside provision is

carefully planned. For example, children try on different types of gloves outside and discuss when they might be used. They choose outdoor games that they wish to play. Staff have correctly identified the need for the greater use of the outdoor area, once the children have settled in this term. Planning of activities to incorporate children's own ideas and reflect their interests more is at an early stage of development. The school has recognised that it needs to plan further to meet the changes in the personal and social development of children when they join the school, in order to sustain their good academic progress.

What the school should do to improve further

- Plan to meet the changing needs of young children when they join the school.
- Develop the curriculum for the most able pupils.

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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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	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/or disabilities make progress	2

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	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	2
The extent to which 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 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

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 eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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	2
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**

8 October 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Sacred Heart RC Primary School, Peterborough, PE3 9XD

It was good to meet many of you, see you at work and to listen to your views. Special thanks go to the eco-council I met after lunch and to those of you we joined in the dining room. This letter is to give you a flavour of what is in our full report. Here are some of the best features of your school.

- You make a good start to your schooling in Reception.
- You make good progress with your work in Years 1 to 6 and reach above average standards by the time you leave in English, mathematics and science.
- The headteacher, governors, teachers and all the staff organise the school well for your benefit. Everyone has a chance to do well.
- You enjoy school very much because teachers make lessons interesting.
- The eco-council is doing a really good job. It was pleasing to see so many of you growing things and taking such a keen interest in the environment.
- You work hard and behave extremely well.

I agree with your teachers that that the school now needs to:

- help the Reception children to settle into school
- develop the research 'challenges' for those who are ready for them.

I wish you all the very best in the future.

Roger Fry

Lead inspector