

Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112363
Local Authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	310866
Inspection dates	3–4 October 2007
Reporting inspector	Geoffrey Yates

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	
School	201
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Paul Kerr
Headteacher	Mrs Sandra White
Date of previous school inspection	1 December 2003
School address	Lumley Street Barrow-in-Furness Cumbria LA14 2BA
Telephone number	01229 894635
Fax number	01229 894636

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School is an average sized school situated in Barrow. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is above average. Pupils are predominantly from White British families but there are a small number of pupils who are at an early stage of learning to speak English as an additional language. Movement within the pupil population is above average. The school has an above average number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. When children start school, their skills are below those typical for this age, especially in relation to language and communication skills. The school has achieved many awards including the Healthy School Award and the Activemark award. It is the first school in the county to receive the Challenge Award from NACE (National Association for Able Children in Education).

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 is a good school. Effective leadership, management, teaching and teamwork are at the root of pupils' good progress. Parents are very supportive of the school's work. Comments such as, 'we are very pleased with the progress my child has made' and '...staff really care about my children', are typical of those received. Pupils make good progress in their personal development because they are cared for well by effective pastoral systems underpinned by the school's Catholic ethos. As a result, pupils enjoy school and this is reflected in their regular attendance. They behave well and work hard. The strong emphasis on pupils' personal development ensures that they develop a good understanding of how to keep fit, healthy and safe.

Pupils' positive attitudes and the effective teaching and support they receive from teachers and teaching assistants means that the pupils' achievement is good. Although the 2006 assessments and national test results were below average at the end of both key stages, these results were affected by high numbers of pupils joining the school at times other than the Reception year. There was also a high proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in Year 6. The unvalidated results for 2007 show a marked improvement except in relation to the attainment of boys in Key Stage 1 which lags behind that of the girls. A strength of the school is the effective support given to pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. As a result, these pupils make good progress, as do those for whom English is an additional language.

Pupils make a strong contribution to the school and wider community. They take their responsibilities seriously, especially school council members who are proud of the fact that they have a say in 'their' school. Good links with the local high school smooth the transition from primary to secondary education and also enhance the pupils' learning experiences. The quality of teaching is good overall. It is particularly strong at the end of Key Stage 2. Teachers know their subjects well and have good relationships with the pupils. However, assessment information is not always used as effectively as it might be to ensure that all pupils make consistently good progress. The curriculum is of a good quality and provides many opportunities for pupils to take part in extra-curricular activities and community events.

The leadership and management of the school are good. Self-evaluation is accurate and improvement plans identify relevant priorities and areas for long-term development. The governing body is well informed and knowledgeable. The school has a good capacity to improve and provides good value for money.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children make good progress because teaching is of a good quality. They settle well into school because of the high quality care and guidance they receive. Strong emphasis is placed on the development of communication, language and literacy skills and children are able to link some sounds to letters, naming and sounding the letters of the alphabet. Their personal development and well-being are good. Children are given early opportunities to take responsibility and develop independence, for example, by taking the registers to the school office. By the end of Reception, the majority of pupils have reached the levels expected for their age, although communication and language skills are not as strong as other areas of their learning.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that assessment information about pupils' progress is used effectively to ensure all pupils achieve well.
- Raise the achievement of boys in Key Stage 1.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Although standards were below average in the 2006 assessments and national tests, pupils achieve well and they make good progress. This is not always reflected in the end of key stage assessments and tests because of the high levels of pupils' mobility and numbers of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. For example, a sixth of the 2006 Year 6 cohort joined the school only the year before in 2005 and there were a high number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Overall progress is good in Years 1 and 2 but not all boys make consistently good progress in writing and mathematics and, as a result, do not achieve as well as the girls. The results of teacher assessments in reading, writing and mathematics in 2007 show a marked improvement, but again, boys have not done as well as the girls. Overall progress is also good in Key Stage 2, especially at the end of the key stage. The school exceeded the challenging targets set for 2007.

Standards are improving and more pupils are achieving well. However, the use of assessment information is not as rigorous as it might be and progress is not always consistent for all pupils. Progress for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good, as is that for minority ethnic pupils.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Very good relationships result in a happy school where the pupils say, 'everyone is really friendly'. They say they feel safe in the knowledge that adults will listen to them and that there are so many staff in whom they can trust. Attendance is satisfactory. Personal, social and health education (PSHE) helps pupils to become aware of the consequences of their actions. They understand how to follow a healthy lifestyle and eagerly participate in a wide range of physical activities. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, having been developed to reflect the cultures of the pupils in school. For example, pupils learn about Filipino culture because some pupils have a Filipino heritage. Strong links with the Church promote a good Christian ethos, as does charity fund raising. Pupils raise funds to sponsor the education of children in a third world country and this helps to give them a good awareness of life outside the United Kingdom.

Pupils are soundly prepared for their economic well-being as they are beginning to develop the academic and personal skills to equip them for the next stage of their education. Older pupils state that they feel valued and are encouraged to take on jobs around the school which makes them 'feel good'. They look after younger pupils, become librarians and take on the role of being a member of the school council.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers have very good relationships with pupils and have created a positive climate for learning where both parents and pupils say lessons are interesting. Pupils have good opportunities to discuss their work with each other and this contributes well to their speaking and listening skills. Lessons are well organised, briskly paced and clearly focused on what pupils should learn. On the whole, learning activities are challenging as the school is making better use of assessment information, but this is not consistent. The best use of assessment information is made at the end of Key Stage 2. As a result, the work set is not only challenging but also captures the pupils' imagination. Assessment information is also being used better to identify boys' learning needs, for example, by providing extra teaching support, but this is still in the early stages and it is too soon to evaluate its impact. Support staff make a strong contribution to pupils' progress, particularly those who find learning difficult.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The good attention given to pupils' personal development is a major strength of the curriculum. In order to raise standards there is a strong emphasis on the core subjects of English, mathematics and science and an improving focus on information and communication technology (ICT). Good progress has been made in improving provision for science. The school is at an early stage of extending opportunities for pupils to practise the skills learnt in one area across others. Many good opportunities exist for curriculum enrichment, for example, the school has been awarded the Activemark and celebrated cultural diversity by a week of carefully planned activities. Older pupils take part in science taster days at the local high school. Residential visits extend pupils' learning and personal development well. Pupils speak enthusiastically of the many after school clubs, outside visits and visitors to the school, which build on their interests and talents, acting as a springboard for lifelong enjoyment.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The school provides good pastoral support. Pupils feel safe and secure in school, telling inspectors that, 'The teachers are always there for us'. Statutory requirements to safeguard pupils are in place and are checked on a regular basis. Child protection requirements and procedures are clear and understood by all staff. Despite the limitations of the building, health and safety procedures are properly underpinned by risk assessments, enabling pupils to undertake activities safely both on and off school premises. A high emphasis is placed on pupils' personal care by all members of staff. Parents affirm this. Vulnerable pupils are well cared for and given good support by staff. Support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good, as is that for pupils at an early stage of learning to speak English. As a result, both groups are integrated fully into all aspects of school life. Systems for tracking pupils' progress through regular assessments are not yet fully effective. Although the pupils' progress is tracked as they move through school, the information is not used well enough to ensure progress for all pupils is consistent.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The good leadership and management of the school ensure a climate for learning where every child really does matter. The school's recent award for excellence in provision for able, gifted and talented pupils bears testimony to the success of what it achieves. Pupils feel valued, make good progress and are included in everything the school offers. Strong teamwork is evident at all levels. Good improvements have been made since the previous inspection, especially with regard to leadership and in raising standards in science. The senior management team has identified the correct priorities to move the school on and its overall self-evaluation is accurate. The enthusiastic subject leaders have carefully considered plans to raise standards that are already bearing fruit. All staff share the headteacher's determination to seek improvement. Parents and pupils are consulted and their views taken into account. Governors contribute well to the school's development and have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The school is well placed to move on further.

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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	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
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	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
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	3

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?	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?	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	3
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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

6 October 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School, Cumbria, LA14 2BA

I am writing to thank you for your help during my visit, along with my colleague, to your school and to share with you our judgements about it. We were impressed by how friendly you are. You behave well and you work hard and try your best in lessons. The children who acted as 'French waiters' to take round the food after the NACE award ceremony were excellent ambassadors for your school. I will long remember the comment made by one pupil on National Poetry day who said, 'poetry comes from the heart'.

I agree with you that you go to a good school. It is a caring place. You do well in English, mathematics and science but there are some of you, particularly boys in Year one and two, who could do even better. Your school is going use what they know about what you can already do to make sure that all of your lessons are just hard enough to allow you all to achieve as well as you can.

All the jobs you do in school and the way many of you help others, for example, at lunchtimes is certainly helping you to become good citizens of the future. It is good to see that you know what you need to do to be safe and keep healthy and fit.

I hope you continue to enjoy school and wish you the very best for your future.

Yours sincerely

Geoffrey Yates

Lead inspector