

# Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School and Nursery

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	117488
<b>Local Authority</b>	HERTFORDSHIRE LA
<b>Inspection number</b>	312632
<b>Inspection dates</b>	4–5 February 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	David Manuel

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>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	303
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr John Munday
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Rita Cooper
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	3 February 2003
<b>School address</b>	Merry Hill Road Bushey Watford Hertfordshire WD23 1SU
<b>Telephone number</b>	01923 493040
<b>Fax number</b>	01923 493041

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

This is a larger than average sized primary school. It is a Catholic Primary School mainly serving the local parish. The socio-economic circumstances of the area are above average. A majority of pupils come from White British backgrounds but the proportion of minority ethnic pupils is above average. The proportion of pupils needing extra help with their learning in key skills is below average. Attainment on entry is above expected levels but a recent trend has been an increase in the number of young pupils with speech and language difficulties.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

This is a good school. It has some outstanding features. A key feature is the strong commitment to learning and caring for each other based on the Catholic influence. The headteacher provides very good leadership and is well supported by the senior leadership team and all staff. Pupils love their school and are proud of their achievements. They develop a good range of key skills in literacy, numeracy, and science. The provision and standards in information and communication technology (ICT) have improved significantly since the last inspection, when they were judged to be unsatisfactory. These standards are now at expected levels. Pupils' achievements provide a good basis for their future economic well-being. The care and support provided for pupils are outstanding. Teaching assistants make a particularly strong contribution to the good support provided for pupils who need extra help in literacy or numeracy. As a result these pupils also achieve well. Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to stay healthy and safe from danger.

Children settle quickly in the Nursery and the Reception classes and achieve well. By the end of the Reception Year, most attain the levels expected of children of this age and a majority exceed them. Pupils continue to make good progress in Years 1 and 2. In the current Year 2 standards are above average in reading, writing and mathematics. In Years 3 to 6 pupils maintain good progress. In the current Year 6, pupils attain considerably above average standards in English, mathematics and science.

The quality of teaching and learning is good and there are some examples of outstanding practice. Teachers plan lessons well and make learning interesting. Relationships between teachers and pupils are mostly good. Pupils are keen to participate in lessons and are eager to answer questions. Pupils are given good opportunities to reflect upon important issues and make good contributions to the school community and the world beyond. Teachers' marking does not always make clear enough to pupils what the next steps are in their learning and pupils are not involved enough in setting their own individual targets. The curriculum is good and good cross-curricular links are developing but are not yet fully embedded in practice, particularly the links with ICT.

The leadership and management of the school are good. A key feature of the school's success is good teamwork. Teachers and support staff share a strong commitment to making sure that the learning needs of each pupil are fully met. The school's approach to self-evaluation is good and judgements are accurate. Governors provide good support, are fully aware of the issues facing the school and monitor them closely. The school has good capacity to improve further. Finances are managed well. Learning resources and the skills of staff are used effectively and the school provides good value for money.

## Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

### Grade: 2

The Foundation Stage offers an effective start to children's education. Upon entry the children demonstrate good language skills but a recent increase in the number of young children with language difficulties has been identified. Teachers build on these skills effectively as opportunities for speaking and listening are maximised. Relationships are excellent and children settle well. Assessment procedures are rigorous and planning is securely based on the children's needs. Good progress is made in all areas of the Foundation Stage curriculum including the

discrete teaching of letter sounds (phonics). There is a good balance between adult directed activities and free choice activities for the children.

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

- Ensure greater consistency in teachers' developmental marking to make clear to pupils the next steps in their learning.
- Involve pupils more in setting their own individual targets.
- Further develop the cross-curricular links and the use of ICT in the curriculum.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils' achievement is good. The results of national assessments for pupils in Year 2 in 2007 show that standards were significantly above average in reading, writing and mathematics. Standards in the current Year 2 are above expected levels at this stage of the year. The results of national tests in Year 6 in 2007 show that standards were well above average in English and above average in mathematics and science. In the current Year 6 there is a wide range of abilities. These pupils have made good progress and standards in the school remain well above expected levels at this stage of the year in English, mathematics and science. Standards in ICT by the end of Year 6 are currently at expected levels.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding and well supported by the school's commitment to the Catholic faith. Assemblies offer time for reflection and pupils clearly understand the difference between right and wrong. Pupils understand how to stay safe and know that there is someone who will help. They say that bullying is not a problem in school and that difficulties in the playground are 'just sorted out'. Pupils get on well with each other and adopt a positive approach to their lessons. The good behaviour of most pupils helps them make good progress. There is, however, a low level of disruption in a very few lessons. Pupils are successfully adopting healthy practices. They know about eating healthy foods and the importance of taking regular exercise. Pupils respond well when given opportunities to contribute to the running of their school by acting as elected members of the school council. Particularly impressive is the way in which the older pupils look after the younger ones as 'buddies' when they enter Reception. Attendance figures remain only satisfactory despite the rigorous approach the school is taking to improve them. A very small group of pupils account for the majority of the absences.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teachers plan lessons well and always take account of the wide range of ability in each class so that pupils learn effectively. The good planning and progress is based on good subject knowledge. Explanations are clear. The pace of learning is usually good and relationships between pupils and staff are excellent. Teaching assistants are consistently used well. Success criteria for each lesson are usually shared with the pupils. However, teachers' marking needs to make clearer to pupils what they should do to improve. Teaching is enhanced by the use of

ICT, particularly the interactive whiteboards. Assessment procedures are good and in some instances there are clear links to forward planning. Teachers demonstrate good questioning skills and consistently take careful account of the different abilities in the class.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum is broad and meets statutory requirements. Good provision begins in the Nursery and is developed well across the school. There is good emphasis on learning key skills in literacy and numeracy and good links are developing across the curriculum. However, it is too early to say that these are embedded in practice. Pupils enjoy the good range of clubs and activities, visits and visitors which enrich the curriculum. These activities contribute to their good learning, especially in music and sport, their social development and their awareness of healthy lifestyles. The particularly strong emphasis on personal, social and health education makes a significant contribution to pupils' personal development. Provision for ICT has improved significantly since the previous inspection with increased resources. However, the development of a full range of key ICT skills is not yet fully in place. It is intended that the newly created link with a school in Rwanda will further develop pupils' ICT skills.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

The levels of individual care and support shown by staff to pupils are excellent and reflect the strong caring atmosphere. Child protection and other safeguarding procedures are very robust and all staff receive regular training. The school successfully ensures that all pupils are included and play their part in school life. There are good links with support agencies that contribute to the good care for pupils. Academic guidance is good overall but the work begun on individual target setting and developmental marking, which shows children the next steps in their learning, needs to be developed further. There are some excellent examples in mathematics of pupil tracking which focus on progress through Key Stage 2. These procedures now need to be used in other subjects, particularly English and science.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

The leadership and management of the school are good. The headteacher has been successful in establishing a thriving learning environment that is based on doing everything possible to ensure that excellence and enjoyment permeate the school. One parent commented, 'This is a warm and friendly school with high levels of care'. Staff work together very well and have developed a common policy as together they work to provide a good quality education to enable pupils to learn not only academic skills but key life skills. This shared commitment is based on a clear understanding of what the school needs to do to improve. Key members of staff monitor their areas of responsibility well and contribute effectively to the school's improvement. The overwhelming majority of parents are very supportive and pleased with the education provided for their children.



## 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 <sup>1</sup> 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	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
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	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

<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>	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	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**

7 February 2008

Dear Children,

Inspection of Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School and Nursery, Bushey, Hertfordshire, WD23 1SU.

Thank you for being so friendly and helpful when we visited your school. We thoroughly enjoyed our visit.

You told us that you were proud of your school and that you really do enjoy being there. We felt the lovely family atmosphere in the school too. Your teachers teach you well. You work hard in lessons and are keen to learn new skills and to find out more about the world. You are very good at English, mathematics and science. You are very polite and sensible. Older children set good examples to all the others and this helps everyone get on well together. Your understanding of spiritual, moral, social and cultural matters is extremely good and you have an excellent understanding of how to stay healthy. Most of you are well behaved, but a few of you need to concentrate harder in lessons. Your school councillors involve you in thinking about ideas for improving the school such as the new playground equipment. You like your teachers and support staff and appreciate all that they do to help. You also say that everyone is treated fairly as part of the school family and we agree with you.

There are a few things that we think would help to improve your school even further. Firstly, we think teachers should make clearer to you, when they mark your work, exactly what you have to do to improve. We also want them to involve you more in setting your personal targets in subjects. We would also like you to use ICT more in all subjects to help you become even better in your work.

We believe that there are even more exciting times ahead and we wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely,

David Manuel

Lead inspector