

Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School, Thornton-Cleveleys

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119632
Local Authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	313365
Inspection date	23 April 2008
Reporting inspector	Joe Clark

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	167
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Tony Edwards
Headteacher	Mr Paul Eaton
Date of previous school inspection	1 November 2004
School address	Heys Street Thornton Thornton-Cleveleys Lancashire FY5 4HL
Telephone number	01253 821392
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector who evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues.

- How well pupils in all key stages are currently progressing.
- Whether attendance is improving.
- The effectiveness of leadership and management at all levels.

Evidence was gathered from discussions with senior leaders, teachers and other adults, pupils and governors. Parents' views, as reflected in the Ofsted questionnaire, were considered. Lessons were sampled. Documentation was scrutinised. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector 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.

Description of the school

Sacred Heart is smaller than most primary schools. Its pupils come from a wide area, where socio-economic conditions are average. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is average. The vast majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is average. The proportion with a statement of special educational need is above average. More pupils than usual join and leave the school other than at the usual times.

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. No aspect of its provision is less than satisfactory and much of it is outstanding. It provides good value for money. Parents have great confidence in the school. One parent's comment was typical of many: 'My daughter thoroughly enjoys school at the Sacred Heart. She has made terrific progress throughout the years she has attended. The teachers are approachable and hard working and I would recommend this school to anyone.'

When pupils leave school at the end of Year 6, their standards are usually well above average and their achievement is good. In the 2007 national tests at the end of Year 6, standards overall were average and achievement was satisfactory, unlike in each of the previous three years when standards were significantly above average and achievement was good. Only standards in science remained significantly above average in 2007. The fall in standards and achievement was due in large part to staffing difficulties which have now been resolved. Results in the 2007 tests at the end of Year 2, indicated that standards in reading and, particularly, in writing were below average and in mathematics were average. This again was a decline from previous years when standards were, in the main, significantly above average. Evidence from the inspection, particularly the school's own excellent systems for tracking and recording pupils' progress, as well as direct observation, indicates that pupils are again making good progress and achieving significantly above average standards. There has been a big improvement in both key stages in the standard of writing, where initiatives such as 'Big Write' have led to rapid improvement.

Pupils achieve well because teaching and learning are good and pupils bring excellent attitudes to their work. Lessons are conducted at a brisk pace with timed tasks appropriate to pupils' capabilities. Activities are varied and capture pupils' interest. Pupils spoke enthusiastically about role play opportunities and paired and group-work tasks. Marking is good, with clear guidance on where pupils are at in terms of National Curriculum levels, and how they need to improve to achieve a higher level. Teaching assistants are well deployed and offer good support. Planning is generally good and takes account of the different ability groups in the class. It does not, however, always use the wealth of assessment data to target individual pupils, especially the more able pupils, and ensure they are set the most challenging work possible. A good curriculum supports pupils' good achievement. It matches the needs of most groups, especially pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including pupils with statements; these pupils receive good support and make good progress. Provision for developing the talents of gifted and talented pupils is at an early stage of development with a summer school planned for this July. Opportunities for enrichment through out-of-school visits and having visitors to the school are good. There are good curricular links with other providers such as Fleetwood Sports Partnership, Thornton Cricket Club and the local Catholic high school. A link with a school in Nepal gives pupils an insight into other cultures. The school is working towards providing a minimum of two hours per week of physical education for each pupil. Curriculum support in developing pupils' information and communication skills is satisfactory; discrete lessons ensure coverage of the National Curriculum in the subject, but pupils have no access to computers out of lesson times.

Pupils greatly enjoy coming to school. They participate enthusiastically in all that the school offers, including residential visits and a good range of extra-curricular activities. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Relationships with teachers and adults and with each other are excellent, reflecting the school's strong Catholic values and the good level of care the school takes of its pupils. Pupils' behaviour is outstanding. Pupils say there is

no bullying and they feel safe in school. Serious incidents of misbehaviour are practically unheard of. Pupils treat each other with respect and make a good contribution to the community, especially the parish community. In school, older pupils relish the opportunities to exercise responsibility, for example, helping younger pupils on the yard and at lunchtimes or being their Mass Partners. They enjoy planning and leading their own liturgies. Pupils are aware of the benefits of adopting a healthy lifestyle, particularly through diet and exercise. Following a talk by the meals service on healthy eating, for example, the uptake of school meals almost doubled. Attendance was well below average in the last academic year but since September 2007, attendance is back up to the satisfactory level of previous years. Preparation for the next stage of pupils' education is good as they leave school with good basic skills and excellent social skills.

The school has suffered from staffing difficulties for several years, both at senior and classroom level. However, this situation has now stabilised. A new leadership team has been in place since September and already there are signs of improvement, not least in reversing the fall in achievement and standards seen in 2007. The headteacher provides clear and direct leadership, something parents were keen to comment on. 'As a family we all feel that the new headteacher has made a significant improvement to the school,' was typical of many comments. He is well supported by the acting deputy headteacher and other senior leaders. Parents expressed great confidence in the school. New initiatives such as termly curriculum newsletters and biannual consultation evenings, monthly newsletters and, in some year groups, parenting classes, have greatly improved communication with parents. The Friends of Sacred Heart group has worked very effectively with the school council in providing an exciting 'Trim Trail' for use at lunchtimes and breaktimes. Systems for monitoring and evaluating the school's work are good. The school knows itself well and its self-evaluation, which involves both staff and governors, is accurate. The role of subject coordinators in raising standards is being developed but is not yet consistently strong. Forward planning is good. Thought is being given to the problems associated with accommodating pupils with physical disabilities in the older classrooms which will not meet health and safety regulations. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection and there is good capacity for further improvement. School targets for the end of key stage tests are appropriately challenging and consistently met.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Provision in the Foundation Stage is good. Most children who join Reception have benefited from pre-school nursery provision and levels of attainment on entry are broadly typical for their age. They are well taught and make good progress. Most children leave Reception with standards close to or above national expectations. Their confidence and self-esteem are nurtured effectively and they benefit from the active support, reassurance and encouragement of older pupils. Children enjoy their learning and work, and play cheerfully and enthusiastically. Leadership and management of the Foundation Stage are good. Teaching assistants are well deployed and provide effective support. There is a good balance between activities directed by adults and those that the children plan and organise for themselves. The well equipped outdoor play area is used imaginatively and an exciting new nature area is being developed.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that assessment data are used by teachers to set challenging work for individual pupils, especially for the most able.

- Develop the role of coordinators to play a more active part in monitoring and evaluating the work in their subjects.
- Provide greater access to computers out of lesson times.

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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	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	2
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	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 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

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	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

24 April 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School, Thornton Cleveleys, Lancashire, FY5 4HL

Thank you so much for the very warm welcome you gave me when I visited your school recently. I really appreciated the help you gave me and the interesting and exciting things you told me about your school. It was a pleasure to talk to you both in the warmth of your classrooms and when sheltering from the wind in the corner of the yard! You will be pleased to know that I think Sacred Heart is a good school. There are many reasons for this. Probably the most important one is that it has such terrific pupils! I was so impressed with how the school has nurtured (is that a WOW word?) your spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. It really is outstanding. Your attitudes and behaviour are excellent. You are a credit to your family and your school.

Your teachers have played their part in bringing this about. They teach you well and take good care of you. Consequently, you reach much higher standards than in most other schools and make better progress too. Your standard of writing is improving all the time. Keep it up!

You told me of the recent changes in the school since you got a new headteacher, particularly the introduction of a school council, which has already had an impact through the development of the 'Trim Trail.' Your attendance has also improved this year which is good news. Poor attendance at primary school can seriously affect the progress you make in life.

There are one or two things I have asked the school to do to help you make even better progress. You told me, for example, you would like to use computers at lunchtimes and before and after school and the school is going to look into this and see if it can be done. In lessons you generally find the work interesting and you certainly work hard, but the school is going to make sure that you are fully stretched, particularly those of you who find the work a little easy at times. Finally, a lot of new teachers started recently, some of whom have taken on new responsibilities. The school is going to provide training to ensure they are able to exercise these responsibilities more effectively.

Once again, thank you for all your help and good luck for the future.

Yours sincerely

Joe Clark

Lead inspector