

Sacred Heart RC Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	100437
Local Authority	Islington
Inspection number	323279
Inspection date	12 May 2009
Reporting inspector	Margaret Goodchild

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	356
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	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dr Paul Lasok
Headteacher	Mr John Lane
Date of previous school inspection	23 May 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	68 Georges Road Holloway London N7 8JN
Telephone number	020 7607 3407
Fax number	020 7607 4906

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues.

- How good is provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage?
- Is overall achievement good or outstanding, and how does the quality of teaching contribute to this?
- How effective and efficient at all levels are the school's self-evaluation systems in driving school improvement?

Inspectors gathered evidence from documents and records, lesson observations, pupils' work, and discussions with staff and pupils. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but inspectors 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 this report.

Description of the school

The school is larger than most primary schools. A very high proportion of the pupils are of minority ethnic heritage. The two largest ethnic groups are White British and Black African. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is very high and there are 29 different home languages spoken. An increasing number of pupils from Poland and other Eastern European countries have joined the school recently. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is well above the national average. The Early Years Foundation Stage is made up of 52 children in the Nursery and 45 in the Reception Year.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Senior leaders are right in thinking that this is an outstanding school. They have very high expectations and an absolute commitment to school improvement. This means that Sacred Heart is a school where being outstanding is expected, and everything is focused on making that possible for staff and pupils alike. The school is popular and oversubscribed, and parents are highly satisfied with its work. Typical of the views of many parents were comments such as 'I could not dream of a better school for my son', and 'This is a fantastic school, with a super team of teachers who make sure the pupils have the very best education'. Pupils are also extremely positive about the school. They describe it using words such as 'fun', 'brilliant', 'cool' and 'awesome', and say that the staff 'never give up on you'.

A number of key features come together to make this an outstanding school. Most importantly, the senior leaders work exceptionally well together and provide very clear direction to the school's work. The headteacher receives outstanding support from the deputy and assistant headteachers, and there is seamless leadership among the senior management team. Leadership has been very strategic since the last inspection in driving the school forward and establishing a shared vision of excellence. As a result, the school has made outstanding improvement and is very well placed to improve further. There is a shared culture of high expectations, and a commitment to making provision as good as possible for the pupils. As part of this, some extremely focused and successful work has been done to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Senior leaders have engaged all the staff in identifying what characteristics are needed to make teaching and learning outstanding, and used the agreed criteria as the basis for lesson observation.

Rigorous monitoring provides very detailed information about what is working well and where there is scope for further development. The findings from lesson observation, and scrutiny of pupils' work and of teachers' planning, are used exceptionally well to identify the next steps in development. Coaching and staff training are then used extremely well to increase the skills of the staff. The impact of this is evident in the improvement in teaching since the last inspection: the quality of teaching was good at that time and is now outstanding.

Another important feature that makes this an outstanding school is the thoroughness with which pupils' performance is assessed, their progress tracked and the resulting information analysed. An exceptional grasp on data means that senior leaders have answers to key questions about school effectiveness at their fingertips. It also means that teachers are very clear about how well individuals and groups within their classes are doing, and where there are any gaps in their learning. Data is not only used to track pupils' progress, but also to pinpoint where adjustments are needed to improve provision and to identify individuals who need additional support.

Leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage, of Key Stages 1 and 2, inclusion, and the work as part of being an Extended School, are outstanding. The leadership of English and mathematics is also outstanding; leadership in other subjects is good overall. In these subjects, leaders check teachers' planning and pupils' work, take part in some lesson observation, and are becoming increasingly involved in data analysis. The school recognises that the next step in school improvement is to ensure that all subject leaders become involved in strategic leadership. The governing body is led exceptionally well by the chair, and governors provide good support and challenge to the school. Governors have recently been linked with

particular subjects, and conduct some visits to monitor the school's work. However, this aspect of governance is not as well developed as it could be, so that governors are too dependent on staff providing them with information about the school's work.

The curriculum is matched exceptionally well to the needs and interests of the pupils, and the school environment is rich with stimulating and highly informative displays that celebrate achievement and promote further learning. Lessons are planned very well so that work builds on the existing attainment of different groups of pupils. The outstanding relationships that pupils have with their teachers give them confidence to 'have a go' at the challenges provided, and lessons proceed at a lively pace, which sustains pupils' attention. Their work is frequently marked against the points which teachers have said will indicate success. Pupils say that they receive very good feedback about how to reach higher standards. They have exceptionally positive attitudes to learning and well-developed learning skills.

Achievement is outstanding, pupils meet their challenging targets, and standards are above the national average. The attainment of most children is very low for their age when they join the Early Years Foundation Stage, and this is particularly the case in their social, communication and language skills. From this starting point, pupils make outstanding progress to reach above average standards by the time they leave in Year 6. At the time of the last inspection, more-able pupils were not always doing as well as they should. Since then, the school has put in place clear procedures so that any emerging underachievement is quickly addressed. This has led to a distinct increase in the number of pupils reaching higher National Curriculum levels. In 2008, the percentage gaining Level 3 at the end of Key Stage 1 was above the national average, and Black African pupils reached exceptionally high standards compared with similar groups nationally. In national tests at the end of Key Stage 2, results were above average in 2007, with well above average standards in English and science, where a significant number of pupils reached Level 5. In 2008, results were average overall, as over a third of the pupils in that year group had learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Nevertheless, progress at Key Stage 2 was good, and it was outstanding in 2007. The school's own data, confirmed by inspection findings, show that standards are rising throughout the school, and predictions for attainment in 2009 exceed those of 2008 in all areas. The excellent personal qualities that pupils develop, and the outstanding progress that they make in gaining basic skills, prepare them exceptionally well for the next stage of their education.

Pupils receive outstanding care, guidance and support, and the school has rigorous systems in place to ensure that they are protected and safeguarded. Pupils and their families receive valuable support through the learning mentor and activities arranged through the Extended Schools initiative. Pupils for whom English is an additional language are supported exceptionally well and their progress is closely tracked. The school works very well in partnership with parents. It provides a range of workshops for parents - in phonics, writing, information and communication technology, and science - to extend their skills and help them to support their children's learning.

Pupils' personal development is outstanding: they love school and respond exceptionally well to all that the school has to offer. Relationships between different groups of pupils are harmonious, and pupils greatly enjoy the cultural diversity. They praise the way newcomers are included, saying, 'We make friends with everyone.' Pupils' behaviour is outstanding. The school has thorough systems for promoting and rewarding regular attendance, and most pupils attend very regularly. The school has worked closely with the education welfare officer and other agencies to tackle the irregular attendance of a small minority of pupils, and through systematic improvement has brought attendance up to a satisfactory level. The school council plays an

important role, and pupils have outstanding opportunities to contribute to and learn from the community. There are very strong links with local businesses and sporting organisations, which enrich pupils' learning. The school instils in pupils a respect for different faiths, and does much to celebrate its culturally diverse intake. Pupils are involved in collecting practical resources for use by children in Columbia as well as in other fund-raising; the school's contribution to community cohesion is outstanding.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Children make exceptionally good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Teaching is outstanding, and the children are quick to become absorbed in the wide range of activities. Classrooms are very well stocked with varied and stimulating resources that are easily accessible to the children. The outdoor areas provide a wide range of exciting and varied learning activities. Teachers are innovative in the way they capture children's imagination. For example, at the time of the inspection, they had made miniature 'rooms' by sticking photographs of the school environment to the inside of small cardboard boxes to support imaginative play. Assessment and tracking are very thorough, and parents are involved regularly in observing their children's development at home. They are also given very good opportunities to increase their understanding of their children's early development by attending workshops. Last year, the school did less well in communication, language and literacy than in other areas, but children's attainment in this area shows marked improvement as a result of increased emphasis on the teaching of early reading and writing skills. Children's overall attainment is broadly average, and above average in some aspects of their work. Attainment is slightly less good in creative development than in other areas. Although there are excellent opportunities for pretend play and imaginative development, artistic development is only satisfactory. The Early Years Foundation Stage is led and managed exceptionally well, and teamwork among the staff is strong.

What the school should do to improve further

- Extend the outstanding leadership that exists in the senior management team to all subject leaders, and increase the involvement of link governors to increase the governing body's knowledge of the school's work.

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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?	1
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?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	1
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	1
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?	1
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	1

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	1
The extent to which 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	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 learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	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
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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	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**

01 June 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Sacred Heart RC Primary School, London, N7 8JN

Thank you for making us so welcome when we visited your school. We really enjoyed our visit and the time went too quickly: it would have been lovely to see even more of your school and the exciting work that you do. You told us that the school is 'brilliant' and 'awesome', and many of your parents wrote to say how pleased they are with the school's work. We agree with your views about the school, and I am very pleased to tell you that you go to an outstanding school.

There are many very good things about your school. These are some of the best things we found out about it:

- you make really good progress, and you are reaching higher standards than most pupils of your age in other schools
- you love school and try very hard in lessons
- the teachers do all they can to make learning interesting and to make that sure your classrooms have stimulating and informative displays
- you get on very well together, develop many important personal qualities, and behave exceptionally well.

The headteacher and the other teachers who manage the school do a really good job, and they are always looking for ways of making the school even better for you. We want to help them with this, and have asked them to make sure that:

- the leadership of all the subjects becomes as good as the leadership of the school as a whole
- governors become more closely involved, especially by visiting the school to see you learning and look at the work that you do.

I hope you enjoy the rest of your time at Sacred Heart and wish you all the best for the future.

Yours faithfully

Ms M J Goodchild

Lead Inspector