

# Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Primary School Blackburn

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	119510
<b>Local Authority</b>	Blackburn with Darwen
<b>Inspection number</b>	339459
<b>Inspection dates</b>	24–25 May 2010
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Jon Lovgreen

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>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	199
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr N Kennedy
<b>Headteacher</b>	Ms H Ahmed
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	18 January 2007
<b>School address</b>	Lynwood Road Blackburn Lancashire BB2 6HQ
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 10 lessons, seeing all classroom teachers and a range of support staff at work. They held meetings with the Chair of the Governing Body, several sets of staff, and various groups of pupils. Pupils' written work was checked both in class and in displays around school. Additionally, a detailed scrutiny of pupils' work in English and mathematics took place. Inspectors looked at monitoring and planning documents, minutes of governing body meetings, and external reviews of the school's work. Data on pupils' standards and progress were analysed in detail. Questionnaires returned by pupils, staff and 39 parents and carers were also scrutinised.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following.

- The attainment and progress of pupils in Key Stage 1 and of all pupils in mathematics.
- How successful major changes in school leadership and governance have been.
- Whether teaching is of consistently high enough quality to ensure pupils' good progress.
- How well the school encourages pupils to take responsibility and widen their horizons.
- Whether children make good progress in the Reception class.

## Information about the school

Sacred Heart is an average size school in a culturally diverse area close to a town centre. The proportion of pupils coming from minority ethnic backgrounds has increased rapidly and is now high. An increasing proportion is at an early stage of speaking English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average, but the proportion with a statement of special educational needs is below that normally found. The number of pupils known to be entitled to a free school meal is above average.

Governors' resignations resulted in the local authority forming an interim executive board to take over the running of the school in July 2009. Staffing has been turbulent for some time but is now stable. The school had four headteachers in two years, but permanent appointments for both headteacher and deputy headteacher have now been made. The school has the Silver Eco Award, the Silver Primary Quality Mark in geography and National Healthy School Status.

**Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate**

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

## Inspection judgements

**Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?**

**2**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**3**

### Main findings

Sacred Heart is a good school which has successfully negotiated a period of considerable change and instability. There have been many staff changes, including at senior level, and the local authority has had to take over the governance of the school. Throughout this time, what is best for pupils has remained at the forefront of the school's work. That standards have risen is a testament to the hard work and dedication of those who have worked in the school and to the local authority's guidance and support.

Staff know the importance of getting to know pupils and helping them to settle and feel valued. As a result, pupils are happy, behave well and work hard: 'a friendly school with a good atmosphere', and, 'if there's a problem, it always gets sorted out', were typical comments. Overall good progress follows on from this. However, this good progress is not consistently evident. For example, standards in mathematics lag behind those in other subjects, especially in Key Stage 1. Standards in writing are improving quickly, but teachers do not expect younger pupils to write at sufficient length. Marking of pupils' writing generally gives them too few pointers on how to improve.

Well prepared lessons ensure pupils enjoy their learning. Classrooms are stimulating. The curriculum has lots of interesting activities and visits but it is largely organised in traditional subject areas. Recent planning to move to a more creative curriculum is encouraging, but pupils do not yet get enough experience of how to transfer skills from one area into another, or to see links between subjects. Opportunities for pupils to learn and use information and communication technology (ICT) are patchy.

Senior leaders have been successful in creating a sense of teamwork among the staff. Issues have been tackled with energy and enthusiasm. Much good work has been done in tracking pupils' progress. The school has a satisfactory capacity to improve because action plans are extensive, based on secure self-evaluation and involve teams of staff. They are, however, too broad and vague to give clear priorities. Monitoring of the school's work and initiatives is regular and detailed, but lacks sharpness. However, given pupils' rates of progress and how well they develop as young people, the school gives good value for money.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Enable pupils to make consistently good progress in mathematics and writing, through :
  - more practical tasks in mathematics, including links to other subjects
  - a greater focus on helping pupils to use and understand mathematical terms

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- better marking of pupils' extended writing to provide them with exact advice about how to improve.
- Plan a more stimulating curriculum, by:
  - making more imaginative use of topic work to link areas
  - providing more opportunities for extended writing in Years 1 to 3
  - ensuring the better use of information and communication technology.
- Increase the effectiveness of leadership and management in driving improvement, through:
  - more precise action plans with clearer priorities
  - more rigorous monitoring of school improvement.

**Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils****2**

In lessons, pupils behave well and are keen to learn. They work well in groups and learn the value of sharing ideas. They show a good awareness of safety in how they handle equipment and move around school. Their keenness to eat fruit and to have active breaks and lunchtimes are examples of their good awareness of the importance of staying healthy. They relish taking on responsibilities: as playground buddies and prefects they make an important contribution to school life. School council members have been influential in negotiating healthy drink options, and the school travel plan. Pupils decide on which charities to support, involve themselves in community litter picks and entertain local care home residents. They get on well together, showing interest in, and tolerance of, other cultures and religions. This is evident in assemblies and in their enthusiasm for events, such as dance celebration and African drumming.

Pupils make good progress during their time in school, but their rate of progress varies. From overall below average skills on entry, they consistently attain average standards by the time they reach the end of Year 6. Standards in the 2009 end of Key Stage 2 national tests rose to above average for the first time. Past issues such as lower standards in reading, and Pakistani boys making less progress, are being successfully addressed. Progress in mathematics is slower because too much of the work is isolated from real-life experiences, and too little time is spent on practical activities. Pupils are taught specialist mathematical vocabulary but struggle to recall it and so cannot use it to explain and apply their knowledge. Pupils' progress in writing is good, but relies heavily on a good start in Reception and a strong acceleration in upper Key Stage 2. In Years 1 to 3, pupils make limited progress in writing and cannot sufficiently apply their writing skills to other subjects. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those at the early stages of learning English make good progress. The standards pupils reach, and their average attendance, give them a sound basis for moving on to the next stage of education.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

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<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	3
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>2</b>

### How effective is the provision?

Teachers plan lessons carefully, making sure that pupils understand not only what they are to do, but how it will help them. The clear explanations and the good use of whiteboards and displays, help to focus pupils' interest and attention. Brisk questioning and good use of pair discussion and group work result in pupils working with enthusiasm and at pace. Teachers work hard to support individual pupils while group work is going on, but sometimes miss minor inattention or let chatter develop too much. However, good relationships and well-organised classrooms are the norm. Regular marking means that teachers have a good idea of pupils' progress and levels of understanding. This is effectively used to monitor overall progress and to highlight where language or learning needs require extra help or classroom support. A weakness in marking is that, while helpful, it too often gives only brief and general comment about how writing, especially more extended pieces, could be improved.

The curriculum is well planned but relies on traditional subject divisions. This results in all areas being covered but in pupils being less aware of how to apply their skills across subjects. Good examples were seen, for instance, of pupils planning formal accounts of natural disasters, and working out theme park costings using a spreadsheet. Generally, however, topic work is limited and sometimes unimaginative. While French and personal, social and health education are well integrated into the curriculum, ICT is not. Younger pupils get too few opportunities to write at length. Enrichment activities,

<sup>1</sup> The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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however, are good. Environmental studies in geography, science workshops, and visits by a local artist broaden pupils' horizons. Pupils talk enthusiastically about what is offered beyond lessons. Story, cooking, tennis, cricket and chess clubs are popular, as are enterprise activities.

Pupils feel safe, well cared for and listened to. Arrangements to help them join the school, move classes, and move on to secondary school, are well thought out and effective. Initiatives such as a 'worry box' and a drop-in lunchtime nurture club help to give pupils support when they feel the need. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are swiftly identified and sensitively helped. Good records and communication with parents, and effective liaison with health and welfare services, further ensure that pupils' well-being remains at the core of the school's work.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>2</b>

**How effective are leadership and management?**

During a period of sustained and significant change and turbulence, keeping the school on an even keel and ensuring that pupils continued to make good progress were the main challenges. Determined leadership and committed work by staff made this happen. The headteacher rightly saw the need to engage staff in working in teams to tackle school improvement. Teachers have undertaken these responsibilities with energy and enthusiasm. Their work has resulted in ambitious and wide-ranging plans for improving the school. Good use of data to check the school's performance and pupils' progress has been central to this, as have a raft of management systems. These have served their purpose, but senior leaders are aware that the overall action plan, such as a number of key documents, lacks the precision and clarity which will enable good progress to continue. Extensive monitoring processes, too, would benefit from greater rigour, so that the school is totally clear about what works well and where alteration and improvement are necessary.

The committed and experienced members of the interim executive board have a good overview of the school but do not have a sufficiently clear view of standards and progress. Nonetheless, they have had an important influence on giving the school stability and a sense of direction. Safeguarding procedures are thorough and effective and meet all current requirements. School leaders and staff are active in promoting good community cohesion. Partnerships with two other local schools, two-way visits with a school in a contrasting area, and the exploration of links with a school in Pakistan, are

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the result. The school has responded well to the changing cultural background of its intake, while being careful to retain its own heritage. On a practical level, the narrowing of the gaps between how well boys and girls, and Indian and Pakistani pupils do, show a successful approach to equality of opportunity.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>2</b>

## Early Years Foundation Stage

When they join Reception, children's skills vary, but are overall below average. Many have weak number skills and limited experience of creative play. Increasingly, children are arriving with limited language skills and narrow experience of getting on with other children. Progress is good. An open door policy, visits, and initiatives like the 'Kangaroo Club,' soon get parents and carers involved. Children settle quickly, learning the value of routines and the importance of taking responsibility, for instance, for tidying up or playing carefully when others are nearby. They learn to take turns, enjoying sharing work and play with other children. Lessons are lively yet orderly. In one lesson, children quickly learned to repeat and recognise sounds and letters, and showed good progress in writing letters correctly. Expert teaching used chanting, rhythm and movement to enthuse the class. Displays such as the life-cycle of a frog and dangling flowers with simple sums on them, make learning lively and fun. Excellent use is made of available indoor space to provide a range of stimulating experiences. Children can move from reading corners to the 'butterfly café'; from working with floating letters and numbers in sand to mini-beasts' research. Areas are regularly changed and moved around so that children can always find new activities or things to explore. Good and enthusiastic leadership and management result in a welcoming and stimulating setting. Thoughtful



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monitoring has noted the need to help boys to concentrate more in class, and to give a higher profile to writing. Both these issues are being tackled effectively. The school acknowledges that more could be done with the limited outdoor area and equipment, to extend learning activities.

*These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

**Views of parents and carers**

A minority of parents and carers returned questionnaires. Of these, most are very happy with the school. They express support for it and appreciation of its efforts. They feel that the school is settled after a time of major change, and that opportunities such as the reading workshop are helping them to get more involved in their children's education. A number feel that they should be better informed about their children's progress and that the school could be more receptive to ideas and suggestions from them. Inspectors judge that the school is satisfactory in both these areas but could be quicker and clearer in its communication of some issues. Parents and carers are very happy with how much their child enjoys school and the arrangements to look after children's well-being, including moving up into new classes. They also comment on 'a good staff who are accessible and approachable.'

### Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Primary School Blackburn to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 39 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 199 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	21	54	15	38	2	5	1	3
The school keeps my child safe	17	44	19	49	1	3	1	3
The school informs me about my child's progress	16	41	17	44	2	5	3	8
My child is making enough progress at this school	16	41	16	41	5	13	2	5
The teaching is good at this school	14	36	20	51	2	5	2	5
The school helps me to support my child's learning	13	33	18	46	3	8	2	5
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	10	26	23	59	4	10	1	3
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	9	23	26	67	1	3	2	5
The school meets my child's particular needs	11	28	24	62	2	5	2	5
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	12	31	22	56	1	3	4	10
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	10	26	16	41	3	8	4	10
The school is led and managed effectively	11	28	23	59	0	0	4	10
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	16	41	18	46	1	3	3	8

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

## Glossary

### What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

### Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li> <li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li> <li>■ The quality of teaching.</li> <li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.</li> <li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li> </ul>
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

**This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.**



26 May 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Primary School Blackburn, Blackburn, BB2 6HQ

You will remember us visiting your school recently to see how you were getting on.

Thank you for being so polite and helpful, and for telling us what you think of school.

We agree with you: Sacred Heart is a good school! These are the best things about your school.

- You behave well, get on with each other, and usually work really hard in lessons.
- Teachers prepare good, interesting lessons which you enjoy.
- You are doing well with your reading, use discussion well, and your writing is improving.
- You are willing to take responsibility for organising things in school and for getting involved in the local community.
- All the adults in school take good care of you. You always feel that you can turn to them for help and advice.
- The work going on in the Reception class helps you get to off to a flying start in your school careers.

Of course there are always ways to improve things. We have asked staff to:

- help you to do better in mathematics and English by giving you more practical activities and showing you how you can use mathematical skills in other areas; and by marking your writing with clearer suggestions for improvement, and giving those of you in Years 1 to 3 better chances to write more
- make the things you do in lessons more varied so that topics are more interesting and you can see how subjects link together
- make sure that plans by senior staff to improve what goes on in school are simpler, clearer, and checked more carefully.

You can help by listening carefully in lessons and always giving of your best.

Best wishes for your future happiness and success.

Yours sincerely

Jon Lövgreen

Lead inspector

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