



Sacred Heart RC Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 106499
Local Authority Wigan
Inspection number 287528
Inspection dates 5–6 February 2007
Reporting inspector Colin Smith

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary	School address	Lodge Lane
School category	Voluntary aided		Hindsford, Atherton
Age range of pupils	4–11		Manchester, Lancashire M46 9BN
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01942 883429
Number on roll (school)	181	Fax number	01942 883429
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Josephine Carter
		Headteacher	Mrs Carrie Morrow
Date of previous school inspection	5 March 2001		

Age group 4–11	Inspection dates 5–6 February 2007	Inspection number 287528
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Primary School is slightly smaller than average. It serves a community of average social and economic diversity. The proportions of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those entitled to free school meals are below average. The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage. A very small number have other White heritage. All of these pupils speak English as a first language. Most of the teaching staff, including the headteacher, have joined the school since the previous inspection.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The school's overall effectiveness is good, as is the value for money it provides. The school offers a good level of care, guidance and support within a very positive Catholic atmosphere. This ensures that pupils are safeguarded and barriers to learning are removed successfully, particularly for the most vulnerable ones. These factors play a vital part in pupils' personal development, which is outstanding. Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning are exemplary. They develop a good understanding of healthy and safe lifestyles and take their responsibilities very seriously. A good curriculum, redesigned to include creativity and excitement, is making a profound investment in pupils' lifelong interest in learning. These are the foundation stones of the very good preparation for pupils' future. As one parent observed, 'Our children have happy memories and a good education behind them.'

Achievement is good overall. Children enter school with attainment broadly typical for their age and standards are often well above average by the time they move to high school. On the whole, pupils make quicker progress in the junior classes, aided by the careful measurement of their achievements. Any faltering progress is quickly identified and improved. The progress made by pupils in Key Stage 2 in 2006 was in the top 20% nationally. Although teachers assess pupils' learning through Reception and Years 1 and 2, the tracking of their progress is not done with the same rigour. Throughout the school, pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress. However, not all of the more able pupils are currently fulfilling their potential because the work they are given is not sufficiently challenging in every lesson. Standards in English have previously trailed those in mathematics and science. A concerted effort to improve pupils' writing paid dividends, and led to a big improvement in standards in English in 2006. Achievement in information and communication technology (ICT) is good in handling and communicating information but is not secure in some other important areas.

The headteacher is a determined and sensitive leader. She focuses her attention on what matters most and shares her vision well with staff and governors. Teaching and learning are good overall and continuing to improve as the headteacher exerts her influence to ensure that pupils learn successfully in every class. The school's self-evaluation is accurate in virtually all aspects. Although the quality and standards in the Foundation Stage are satisfactory, rather than good. Notable improvements since the previous inspection, particularly the rise in standards, indicate the school's good capacity for further improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Provide a good level of challenge for the more able pupils in every lesson to enable all of them to fulfil their potential.
- Track pupils' progress rigorously from Reception to Year 2 to identify any faltering achievement and intervene to remedy it.
- Improve pupils' skills in ICT.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Children make satisfactory progress in the Reception class and almost all children achieve the learning goals expected by the end of the Foundation Stage. Progress is satisfactory in Year 1 and increasingly good in Year 2. By the end of Key Stage 1, standards are broadly average in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils make good progress in most of the junior classes. By the end of Key Stage 2, standards are well above average in English and science, and above average in mathematics. Standards in these subjects have been above average or higher in four of the previous six years. Pupils reach the challenging targets set. Standards in writing are still behind those in reading but the gap is closing rapidly. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities almost always reach their targets. More able pupils make satisfactory progress. A few of these pupils, mainly boys, having achieved higher levels in Key Stage 1, are unable to reach equivalently high levels in Key Stage 2. Otherwise, boys achieve equally as well as girls. Pupils' achievement in some aspects of ICT is not keeping pace with other aspects. In particular, pupils have too little experience of using ICT to model situations or in controlling processes.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is outstanding. Pupils have a good awareness and show respect for cultures other than their own. Very good relationships and pupils' excellent behaviour contribute significantly to their good achievement. They are polite, confident and self-assured and their attitudes to learning and enjoyment of school are exemplary. This is reflected in the high degree of teamwork, careful presentation of work and good attendance. Pupils talk animatedly about their lessons, particularly the 'super learning days', when creativity and choice are strongly emphasised. Pupils are well aware of the importance of diet, exercise and how to protect themselves from potential risks involving drugs, alcohol and smoking. Adopting safe and healthy lifestyles, in the words of one pupil, 'gives you a brighter future.' Pupils' contribution to the community is excellent. By taking an active part in the school, class and 'eco' councils and becoming playground leaders and members of the food and fruit teams, they play a vital part in decision making. Pupils' mature outlook, diligence and concern for others, coupled with good literacy and numeracy skills, equip them very well for the future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Pupils are very well managed in lessons. Consequently, they work hard and give of their best. This gives teachers and classroom assistants valuable opportunities to work

closely with small groups, without disturbance. Teachers are particularly careful to ensure that pupils understand what they are expected to learn and encourage them to consider how well they have achieved it. Good knowledge of what is expected, along with many homework projects, increases their motivation and improves their learning. Interactive whiteboards are used imaginatively to help pupils to learn visually. This enhances their understanding and sharpens their skills, such as phonics in Year 2. The assessment of pupils' learning is good overall. Teachers use the information profitably to plan activities to cater for pupils' different learning needs. This particularly benefits pupils who find learning difficult and those with average attainment. The extent to which teachers plan challenging activities for the more able pupils is less consistent. Where it is done meticulously, all pupils make good progress. In other classes, lesson planning and teaching does not ensure that the learning of the more able pupils is extended fully in every lesson, which restricts achievement.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grouping subjects together, along with many creative opportunities, has revitalised pupils' learning. As one parent pointed out, 'There are lots of new, fun activities to keep children busy.' By studying interesting topics in depth, pupils' enjoyment of school has rocketed. At the same time, the importance of basic literacy and numeracy skills remains paramount. Pupils' ICT skills are developed well in gathering, organising and presenting information but lack of hardware and software is limiting their progress in other areas. A rich and diverse range of educational visits, visitors and after-school activities nurtures pupils' interests in history, sport, music and modern foreign languages. The strong thread of personal, health and social education makes a valuable contribution to pupils' personal development. By adapting the curriculum and providing additional support, pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well catered for. The school is now turning its attention to the needs of the able, gifted and talented pupils and acknowledges that there is more to do before their needs are fully met.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The recent opening of a Sure Start Nursery nearby prepares children well for school. Once inside school, children settle quickly into the very positive learning atmosphere, described by one parent as, 'Warm and welcoming'. Parents are justified in believing that their children are safe and healthy in school, physically and emotionally. Good relationships with outside agencies, particularly the Child Support Team, are of immense benefit in helping vulnerable pupils to gain confidence and increase their achievement. Good support for pupils who find learning difficult enables many of them to reach the standards expected. The guidance available for pupils, personally and academically, is good overall. Marking is largely good, particularly in writing. Stars are awarded for good work and light bulbs signal where improvements are needed. Consequently, pupils have clear targets to aim for.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher provides very good leadership. Difficult decisions are taken with a combination of determination and sensitivity. She leads by example and encourages others to follow. She receives good support from the leadership team. Teachers' plans, lessons and pupils' books are rigorously examined. The findings become the basis for future improvements. This explains why, for example, pupils' achievement in writing has significantly improved. Where appropriate, additional teaching support is provided to ensure pupils make at least satisfactory progress in all classes.

A strength of the school is the way pupils' progress is tracked in Key Stage 2. At the first sign of any faltering progress, discussions are held and action plans implemented to put pupils back on track. Although teachers assess children's learning within the Foundation Stage and the infant classes, their progress is not tracked from year-to-year in the same way. This partly explains why pupils make quicker progress overall in Key Stage 2 than elsewhere. Governors bring a wealth of expertise to the school. They are kept well informed and play an important part in holding the school to account.

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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
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
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	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.

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 performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	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

Thank you for making us so welcome, showing us what you can do and sharing your ideas with us. We thoroughly enjoyed our visit.

- You are right in believing that your school is a good one. We noticed how well you are cared for and looked after in lessons and in the playground. We feel that this plays a big part in your excellent behaviour. Your school is like a large family. The way you take responsibility for yourselves and others impressed us greatly. We believe the school is giving you a very good preparation for the future and your parents agree.
- Much of the teaching is good. This helps you to learn successfully, achieve well and reach high standards. The work the school has done to improve your writing has made a huge difference to results in English.
- Although much of the credit for your good education must go to your teachers, the work of your headteacher deserves a special mention. She runs the school very well making sure that you are happy and successful learners.

The headteacher and staff are trying to improve the school further and it is our job to help them by pointing out what could be even better.

- First, to ensure that all of the more able pupils reach their full potential, we want all of your teachers to provide challenging work in every lesson. You can help by working hard and tackling those extension activities.
- Second, we want teachers to track your progress through the infant classes as well as it is done in junior classes. This would help teachers to find out immediately where any of you need extra support.
- Third, we appreciate how well your ICT skills are developing in searching the Internet for information and presenting your findings. However, the school must help you to be as good in using ICT to model situations and control things using switches and other devices.