Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105074
Local authority	Wirral
Inspection number	377174
Inspection dates	17–18 January 2012
Lead inspector	Judith Straw

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	383
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Kate Dolmor
Headteacher	Paul Freeman
Date of previous school inspection	22 November 2006
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Introduction

Inspection team

Judith Straw	Additional inspector
Peter Martin	Additional inspector
Jean Tarry	Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed 22 lessons taught by 15 teachers. They held meetings with groups of pupils, members of the governing body, staff and had informal conversations with parents bringing their children to school. They listened to individual pupils reading and talked to them about their work. Inspectors looked at the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) but no responses were recorded. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at data the school had collected on pupils' progress, safeguarding procedures, school improvement plans, records of the school's monitoring and review processes and the work in pupils' books. They considered the 156 questionnaires returned by parents and carers as well as analysing questionnaires from pupils and staff.

Information about the school

This is a larger-than-average-sized primary school. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds, with a below average proportion from minority-ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils for whom English is an additional language is below average. The proportions of pupils with special educational needs and those with disabilities are average. Government floor targets have been exceeded during the past three years.

The school holds a number of awards including the Activemark, Basic Skills mark and Artsmark. The school has achieved 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	**2**

Achievement of pupils	**2**
Quality of teaching	**2**
Behaviour and safety of pupils	**2**
Leadership and management	**1**

Key Findings

- This is a good school. Pupils' attainment overall has been above average for the last three years. Attainment is consistently high in English. It is above average in mathematics. Senior leaders are already taking prompt action to address the slightly lower attainment in mathematics and pupils' progress in this subject is accelerating. Pupils in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in both key stages achieve well. Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about the school.

- Teaching is consistently good across the school with an increasing proportion of outstanding teaching. The school provides excellent support in lessons for pupils with special educational needs and those with disabilities so that these pupils are able to make good progress and reach above average attainment. The effective curriculum puts a strong focus on core skills but not at the expense of creativity, enrichment and enjoyment.

- Pupils behave well, say that they feel safe and have very positive attitudes to learning. The example set by the adults in the school, combined with well-planned and thoughtful lessons and a stimulating curriculum, results in pupils' outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils have a well-developed sense of social responsibility which is seen particularly in their work for different charities. They are proud to belong to a 'Rights Respecting' school. Parents and carers are unanimous that their children are safe and thrive in this stimulating and supportive environment.

- The headteacher and the deputy headteacher's drive and determination, together with their vision to provide the best possible education for all pupils, have been key factors in the school's continual quest for improvement. All staff and members of the governing body share this vision and ambition, so that good, consistent teaching has been maintained over many years, pupils' achievement has been enhanced, attendance is above average, and the emphasis on improving outcomes for pupils is at the forefront of all planning.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Build on existing good and outstanding practice by:
  - ensuring pupils are constantly challenged to achieve the levels of which they are capable, particularly in Key Stage 1
  - raising attainment in mathematics by the end of Key Stage 2 to match the high attainment already achieved in English.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

Children enter the Early Years Foundation stage with skills and abilities broadly in line with those expected for their age but a sizeable proportion have lower attainment in social development, communication, language and literacy, number and calculation. They settle quickly and make good progress so that by the time they enter Year 1 they are achieving at national levels. Children are keen to learn and explore new things and enjoy sharing their discoveries and talking about what they are learning. By the end of Key Stage 1, more pupils than average have reached the levels set for them but fewer pupils than nationally achieve the higher Level 3. In reading, nearly every child achieves the minimum expected level for their age.

By the end of Key Stage 2, attainment is high in reading and writing and above average in mathematics. Pupils with special educational needs and those with disabilities, those who speak English as an additional language and those known to be eligible for free school meals all achieve more highly than similar pupils nationally. Good progress is clearly evident in lessons. Pupils work hard and behave well. They know what they need to do to improve and strive continually to avoid careless mistakes and to produce their best work. They concentrate well, pay attention to instructions and clearly enjoy their lessons. Pupils are proud of their achievements, not only in their academic work, but in sport, music, information and communication technology and art. This is clearly evident in the wonderful displays of pupils' work such as Chinese dragons, Pharaoh's headdresses and letters to pen pals.

Any pupil whom the school perceives to be underachieving receives additional support until they are back on track to achieve well. As a result of their very positive attitudes to learning and the efforts taken by the school to support all pupils, progress is good overall, and for an increasing proportion of pupils it is outstanding. The vast majority of the parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire and all those spoken to during the inspection agreed that their children were making good progress in all subjects, and particularly in English and mathematics. Inspection evidence supports this view.

Quality of teaching

Consistent strengths in teaching across the school include high expectations for behaviour and achievement, excellent relationships, thorough planning to take account of the different needs of pupils and their different learning styles. A wide range of strategies to enthuse and engage pupils and enhance their understanding are deployed. Teaching at its best was pacy and stimulating so that pupils were motivated and eager to learn. For example, in a Year

4/5 lesson on probability, pupils were challenged to 'beat the teacher' with great success. More reflective and thoughtful lessons also result in very good achievement, for example, in a Year 3 art lesson where pupils produced still life pictures, using charcoal and pastels, worthy of any gallery. Pupils' contributions were highly valued and constructive feedback is given regularly so that pupils know how to improve their work. Marking is good across the school, often resulting in a dialogue between teacher and pupil, so that pupils really understand how to reach their targets. Pupils with special educational needs and those with disabilities are supported effectively so that they can take full part in lessons and enjoy their learning. Very occasionally, pace is lost because introductions are a little too long and teachers miss opportunities to move on to more challenging work when it is evident that the more-able pupils have mastered what is being taught.

The curriculum is used imaginatively to promote achievement in literacy and numeracy in as many ways as possible. Pupils enjoy writing in numerous different contexts and developing their skills in using information and communication technology. As well as using computers for research and display, pupils enjoy using digital technology, for example, to film their new scripts for an episode of Dr Who in a Year 5/6 lesson, and regularly use tablet computers in the classroom. Innovative work with a nearby secondary school has enhanced enjoyment of design technology and led to the setting up of a young engineers club. Teachers promote pupils' excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development by helping them to be curious independent learners and exposing them to music, art and the culture of other peoples and faiths.

The vast majority of parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire were agreed that their children are well taught and that the school meets their children's particular needs.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around school is typically good. Pupils are welcoming and friendly to visitors, are intensely proud of their school and are usually considerate towards each other. Pupils are adamant that there is only a little bullying and that, if it happens, it is quickly dealt with by teachers. The pupils know and understand the school's code of conduct and follow it well. They have a very clear understanding of the many forms of bullying including, for example, cyber-bullying. Examples of racist behaviour and other prejudices are very rare and are not tolerated. Through the positive ethos of the school and the curriculum, pupils are prepared to meet the future not just academically but as good citizens.

The school's systematic and well-considered approach to behaviour management ensures that any misdemeanours are dealt with promptly. High expectations for good behaviour are well-embedded so that there is rarely any disruption to learning in lessons.

The school's safeguarding procedures are exemplary and ensure that children are safe. This view is endorsed unanimously by parents and carers.

Leadership and management

The headteacher and his deputy have a very clear vision for Sacred Heart which has ensured a consistently good and improving education for pupils over time. High expectations have been communicated successfully to all who work in the school. The school sets challenging academic targets which fittingly reflect the ambition to be outstanding. This is a

school which never stands still and senior leaders are relentless in their drive to provide the best. School self-evaluation is rigorous and honest and is robustly supported by sophisticated data collection and analysis. These arrangements have been responsible for ensuring the school sustains its above average and high attainment as they have enabled it to keep track of the progress of all pupils. All the other aspects of monitoring, including lesson observations and scrutiny of pupils' written work, are robust and ensure that the quality of teaching continues to improve.

The headteacher has recently reorganised the leadership structure into subject teams so as to devolve leadership and management even more effectively and build capacity throughout the school. Middle leaders pay an increasingly productive role in maintaining an overview of progress across the entire school. Senior leaders have a long track record of supporting and developing staff potential to ensure that teachers have a wide range of opportunities to enhance their practice and develop leadership and management skills. This initiative, combined with consistently good provision over time and further improvements to teaching and learning illustrates the good capacity the school has to improve further.

The good curriculum has been overhauled in the last two years in order to ensure that pupils are better prepared for the next stage of their education not only academically but also to develop character, perseverance and ambition. The impact of the curriculum on pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is evident in the awareness pupils' show towards others, their willingness to consider and reflect in lessons and their whole-hearted participation in numerous fund-raising activities to help people at home and abroad.

The school enjoys excellent relationships with its parents and carers who are kept regularly informed about their children's progress. The vast majority of parents who responded to the questionnaire were very confident that any concerns were listened to by the school and promptly acted upon. Speaking for many, one parent described the school as, 'a first class team'. Partnerships with other schools improve the school's provision. Sacred Heart is currently involved in a 'building capacity' project to develop support for pupils for whom English is an additional language across the local area.

Members of the governing body are exceptionally knowledgeable about the school's work. They support the school highly effectively and are fully involved in self-evaluation and ready to challenge the school where necessary. They monitor all aspects of the school's work and ensure that equality of opportunity is at the heart of the school's work, discrimination is tackled rigorously and safeguarding arrangements are secure.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all 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

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	**Outstanding**	**Good**	**Satisfactory**	**Inadequate**
Nursery schools	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and 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 governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.

19 January 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School, Wirral CH46 8UG

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave us when we visited you in school this week. We would especially like to thank those pupils who talked to us and those who read to us. You were excellent ambassadors for your school.

We have judged that yours is a good school. Here are some of the things that helped us to make our decision:

- you are achieving better than pupils in many other schools
- you make good progress because you have good teaching
- your behaviour is good and you all put into practice the school code of conduct about courtesy and respect
- you say you feel safe and well looked after in school and your parents and carers agree
- you have excellent attitudes to learning, are curious about the world around you and are interested in trying to make other people's lives better
- your school leaders do an excellent job and that is why the school continues to provide a good education and is improving all the time.

Part of our job is to look for ways in which the school can improve further. We have asked the school to help some of you in Key stage 1 to reach the higher Level 3 and to try to raise your attainment in mathematics to the same high level you reach in English.

You can play your part by continuing to come to school every day and enjoy your learning.

Yours sincerely

Judith Straw
Lead inspector

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