

Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111714
Local Authority	Middlesbrough
Inspection number	325442
Inspection dates	4–5 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Mr Clive Petts

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 children	3–11
Gender of children	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	309
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Anne Hood
Headteacher	Mrs Carol Walker
Date of previous school inspection	February 2006
School address	Ayresome Street Middlesbrough TS1 4NP
Telephone number	01642 816083
Fax number	01642 645899

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a large voluntary aided primary school. It serves an area with much socio-economic disadvantage. Early Years Foundation Stage provision is made for children of Nursery and Reception age. Two-thirds of pupils are from a White British heritage with the remainder from a minority ethnic background. This includes an increasing number of children from migrant worker families. About one quarter of the children speak English as a second language which is above the national average. The proportion of children eligible for free school meals is above average. The number of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. The number of children joining or leaving school other than at the normal time is much higher than average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Sacred Heart is a good school with outstanding features that gives good value for money. At the heart of the school's good progress since the last inspection are the crystal clear vision, energy and drive of the headteacher. She is adeptly supported by the governors. The school is highly skilled at including all pupils in every aspect of school life, developing their personal skills and providing outstanding levels of care, guidance and support. A parent's comment, 'my child is happy and well rounded, because she is treated with respect and love from classmates and staff', sums up the feelings of many. Parents and carers are overwhelmingly supportive and appreciative of the way the school provides every opportunity for all children to achieve their best, regardless of their starting point or background.

Good teaching, effective support and an interesting curriculum enable pupils to achieve well throughout the school. They make outstanding progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage. By the end of Year 6, standards are broadly average. Effective action taken by the school has resulted in all pupils achieving equally well in English, mathematics and science. There are no differences in the progress made by different groups. Pupils enjoy the many lively, first-hand learning experiences that are provided for them, although numeracy skills are not applied regularly to more complex everyday situations and problems. In the best teaching, probing questioning challenges thinking and encourages pupils to analyse problems and carefully consider their solutions. This helps them achieve higher standards.

Pupils really do enjoy coming to school because the staff make life good fun and learning appealing. Pupils' enjoyment is illustrated in their good attendance which has been much improved in the last year. Excellent pastoral care and guidance contribute to the school's success and calm atmosphere. They are particularly well prepared socially because of their excellent behaviour and exemplary relationships with everyone. Pupils are given opportunities to appreciate issues within the global community in which they live by, for example, sponsoring a child in India. They share and celebrate their own and other cultures and beliefs which helps to promote community cohesion exceptionally well.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher's determination has led to a strong focus on improvement. She benefits from a hard-working and dedicated team of staff. Governors play their part too in the success of the school. They are extremely well informed about the needs of the local community. Consequently, the school is totally committed to promoting equality, harmony and tolerance and eliminating discrimination. Excellent use is made of partnerships to enhance the quality of learning experiences, for example, using the feeder secondary school's specialist resources for technology projects. Highly successful family learning courses add to the drive to raise pupils' achievement; for example, the Ocean Maths workshops for parents. Innovative strategies adopted by the school are raising achievement. A strong feeling amongst senior leaders is that, 'the best is yet to come'.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage **Grade: 1**

Provision is outstanding in every respect as a result of the powerful impact of inspirational and committed leadership by the Early Years Foundation Stage leader. Children make outstanding progress from starting points which are well below what is typical. At the end of Reception most children are at levels below average but are working well towards levels expected for their age. This is particularly striking for children who are learning English as an additional language. The welfare of children is promoted extremely well. They thrive because of the high level of care and support they receive from a talented team of support staff in vibrant surroundings. Children's personal development and well-being are exemplary. They learn to play together, to take turns and to listen when required to do so. Behaviour too is outstanding. Excellent learning and development provide a solid foundation for children to develop their self-esteem and confidence. For example, older children proudly shared their 'snail trail' made with lots of challenges and a group of boys demonstrated their budding talents as writers of their names. Teaching is characterised by careful targeting of the support for children learning English for the first time and by inspirational creative activities, for example, building cardboard and box models outside. This led to lots of chatter as the children strove to, 'make it reach the sky'. Arrangements to assess children's progress are excellent and culminate in a comprehensive, 'learning journey' record of photographs and examples of work for each child. Importantly, these are available for parents to see as they come and go into the unit.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that numeracy skills are applied to a wider range of practical situations.

Achievement and standards **Grade: 2**

From levels of skills which are well below those typical for their age when they enter the school, pupils achieve well because teaching of basic skills is good. Pupils at an early stage of learning English rapidly grasp essential language skills and often make very good progress. Those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make the same good progress as their classmates. Consequently, pupils reach broadly average standards by the end of Year 6. Cohorts do vary considerably, especially in the proportion joining the school at other than the normal time. Despite good progress, 2008 test results reveal below average standards with weaknesses evident in mathematics at the end of Years 2 and 6. Determined efforts to boost achievement in mathematics have paid off really well. Current school checks on assessment information demonstrate that a large majority of pupils are on course to exceed their challenging targets in English, mathematics and science. More pupils are on target to reach higher levels at the end of Year 2 and Year 6. Despite the significant improvements in mathematics standards, opportunities are sometimes missed to apply numeracy skills to practical problems.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Personal development and well-being, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are excellent. Pupils thrive in a caring and stimulating environment. Pupils commented very positively on their enjoyment of practical activities, for example, science investigations and growing vegetables. Pupils eat healthily, keep fit and understand that healthy lifestyles, they say, 'make our minds work better'. Pupils thrive on responsibility, acting as playground buddies and lunchtime monitors, all contributing very well to ensuring pupils feel safe. Pupils remarked how well their worries and concerns are dealt with and made easier by the regular 'talk shops'. Older pupils have compiled a welcome book for pupils joining the school part way through a year who are learning English. Pupils are developing good basic skills which are equipping them well for the next stage of their learning. A wider awareness of their impact on the local community is evident in their understanding of their roles in sustaining the environment by developing a very strong awareness of 'green' issues such as saving electricity and recycling. Pupils are fully involved in the local community through their close ties with the local parish.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The good progress that pupils make in lessons is the result of the good teaching they receive. This ensures that they are now achieving equally well in all subjects. All staff work hard to make certain that any obstacles to learning are eliminated. Corridors and classrooms are alive with stimulating displays. Pupils are clear about each lesson's purpose and eagerly engage in the well-thought-out, sometimes inspiring activities. The excellent behaviour allows learning to proceed at a good pace and bolsters the quality of collaborative working. Those pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are expertly managed by a talented team of staff. Teachers' constructive assessment of pupils' work gives pupils a clear idea of what needs to be done next. When tasks are not matched as precisely to age and ability, the challenge and pace of learning can slip a little. By contrast, during inspiring lessons thought-provoking questions are used to broaden thinking and understanding.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The good curriculum is crucial in helping staff raise achievement in English, mathematics and science, although too few opportunities exist for pupils to apply their numeracy skills to practical situations. Extra activities, visits and visitors generate enthusiasm for learning. For example, older pupils acting out the experiences of Second World War evacuees on a visit to Ryedale Folk Museum. The provision for personal development is highly successful, particularly in its effect on pupils' respect for the personal feelings of others. Special programmes for pupils who find learning difficult or who are newly arrived in the country and need to learn English are effective. First-hand experiences of other cultures, beliefs and religions prepare pupils exceptionally well for life in a diverse world. Residential visits add purpose to their learning experiences and extend opportunities to take responsibility and show initiative.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The care, guidance and support provided for pupils are outstanding. Arrangements in place to safeguard pupils are very robust. Risk assessments, health and safety, first aid and e-safety training are fully up to date and regularly reviewed. Pupils' academic guidance is exemplary. Their work is marked consistently and effective use is made of the guidance on the pupils' next steps to improve literacy and numeracy. The progress of individual pupils is monitored closely so that those at risk of underachieving are provided with effective extra support. The impact of this is particularly noticeable in the recent improvements to mathematics in Years 3 to 6. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are identified early and supported very well. External agencies provide focused support for pupils with English as an additional language. This contributes very well to their good and often very good progress. A sequence of very effective actions to improve attendance includes, working with the education welfare officer to reduce the number of persistent absentees and introducing rewards for high attendance. This has had a marked impact on reducing persistent absence.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher leads the school exceptionally well. Expectations of what can be achieved have been raised as a result of a firm focus on improvement. The old Edwardian building has been extended and transformed. Resolute approaches have successfully tackled past inconsistencies in the quality of teaching. As a result, progress is now consistent, especially in mathematics. Middle management has been strengthened and this is bolstering the quality of collaborative working as the headteacher nurtures their talents and skills. The school has accurately identified strengths and areas for continued improvement, although judgements in its self-evaluation are sometimes too generous. Governance is even better than it was at the last inspection. It is now excellent. It is self-critical and reflective which enables governors to challenge and hold the school to account in equal measure. There are close ties with all parts of the community. A member of the governing body remarked, 'religion and race make no difference here.' Consequently, community cohesion is a considerable strength. Together, this provides a good capacity to continue and sustain improvements.

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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?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

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?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	2

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 is 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
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
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	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of 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?	1

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 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	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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



6 June 2009

Dear Children

**Inspection of Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Primary School,
Middlesbrough, TS1 4NP**

We thoroughly enjoyed our inspection of your school and appreciated your warm, friendly welcome. We were extremely impressed by the happy family atmosphere and your eagerness to do as well as you can. We thoroughly enjoyed talking to the school council and seeing how much you enjoy your lessons, playtime and lunchtime with your friends. You go to a good school with a number of real strengths. These are some of the things the school does well.

- You are taught well and receive outstanding care, support and guidance.
- You make good progress and achieve well.
- Your behaviour is excellent. We were very impressed with your responsible attitudes and the way you considered each other's feelings.
- You thoroughly enjoy the many interesting activities arranged for you.
- Your school's leaders are determined to continue to improve your school, so that you can all do as well as you possibly can.
- You are exceptionally well looked after and your headteacher and staff work extremely hard to make certain that no-one is left out.
- Your parents are very pleased with your progress in school.

We have asked your school to improve your education by making sure you use your numeracy skills more in practical situations to improve the quality of your work.

You all have an important part to play in continuing to improve your school. You can help by attending regularly, listening very carefully to the advice of your staff and by working as hard as you possibly can. This will help you continue to achieve well and reach even higher standards.

Thank you for helping us with this inspection. We hope the school will keep building on its many strengths.

Best of luck to you all!

Yours sincerely

Clive Petts
Lead inspector