

Sacred Heart RC Voluntary Aided Primary School

Byermoor, Burnopfield, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Tyne and Wear, NE16 6NU

Inspection dates

9–10 January 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Despite effective action to ensure all pupils make rapid progress to reach their full potential, a sustained pattern of above average achievement and attainment has yet to be established, particularly in mathematics.
- Although most teaching observed was good and sometimes outstanding, over time teaching has had insufficient impact on accelerating pupils' progress and raising their achievement rapidly.
- Senior leaders are not always sufficiently searching and precise scrutinising information about the progress and development of pupils, when judging school performance.
- Opportunities are sometimes missed to enable pupils to use their mathematical skills to solve problems in all subjects.
- In a few lessons, the pace of learning is not always fast enough to ensure a consistent pattern of rapid progress, especially in mathematics.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher's high aspirations, passion and drive have enabled the school to improve strongly. Teaching is well led and managed. The governing body are active in the shaping of the strategic direction of the school.
- The good curriculum and appealing range of inspiring experiences meet the needs and interests of pupils well. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent.
- Pupils are really well-informed about risk and danger and display an excellent grasp of how to keep safe.
- Pupils' behaviour is outstanding, whether in lessons, moving around the school or in the playground. Younger children quickly develop excellent self-control. Pupils display highly positive attitudes to learning and are considerate, polite and courteous.
- Senior leaders recognise that the thought-provoking and interesting approaches which already exist provide a model to improve lessons where progress is less rapid.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed seven lessons of which three were joint observations with the headteacher. In addition, the inspector made a number of short visits to lessons and walks around the school site to check the quality of what is provided for pupils.
- The inspector held discussions with: pupils; parents; members of the governing body; school staff, including senior leaders and those with responsibilities such as the leadership of subjects; and the local authority link adviser.
- The inspector took account of the 24 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View). The inspector observed the school's work and examined a range of documentation including the school's own records of pupils' current progress, records from the observation of lessons and checking of pupils' work and the school's improvement planning. Records relating to behaviour and attendance and documents relating to safeguarding were also considered.

Inspection team

Clive Petts, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Sacred Heart is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for pupil-premium funding (which is provided to support the learning of pupils who are entitled to free school meals, in the care of the local authority or the children of members of the armed forces), is lower than the national average.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is above the national average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is lower than average.
- Most pupils are White British. A significantly lower than average proportion of pupils is from minority ethnic groups. None are at an early stage of learning to speak English as an additional language. Higher-than-average proportions of pupils join or leave the school at other than the normal time.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which sets out the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The Little Hearts Pre-School, located on the site but not managed by the governing body, is subject to a separate inspection and will receive its own report which will be published on the Ofsted website
- In February 2011, the school successfully appealed against its planned closure. A new Chair and Vice-Chair of the governing body were appointed in September 2012. Two new teachers were recruited in September 2012.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make certain that all progress is rapid and sustained, especially in mathematics, by:
 - building upon the lively and thought-provoking teaching that exists in the school to increase the proportion of outstanding teaching
 - extending the opportunities for pupils to apply their mathematical skills to solve problems in all subjects
 - ensuring that there is a fast pace to learning in all parts of each lesson to boost achievement, especially in mathematics
 - checking precisely whether or not actions taken are continuously helping to sustain faster rates of progress and higher achievement.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- The legacy of underachievement is being systematically eradicated. However, school records and test results in 2012 at the end of Year 6, reveal that the achievement of pupils in mathematics was not good enough, even though in English it was good. School progress records, confirmed by lessons observations, show that currently pupils in Years 1 to 6 are making increasingly rapid progress in all subjects, with a rising number working above the levels expected of them, especially in reading and writing. Almost all pupils are on course to reach above average standards in English and average standards in mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- Children start Reception with skills below those typical for their age. Their number skills and grasp of shape and measure are particular weaknesses. Children settle quickly into classroom routines and are keen to learn in the happy, lively and friendly atmosphere.
- Good teaching of letter and sound relationships in Reception and Year 1 and 2 enable pupils to make good progress making sense of new words in their early reading and writing. Increasingly, imaginative and lively approaches are now developing children's early numeracy skills at a faster rate. For example, searching for and counting the footprints left by the story book character, the Gruffalo.
- Pupils make good and occasionally rapid progress is being made developing reading skills in Reception and Key Stage 1. Attainment in reading by the age of six is average for their age. Older pupils read texts with much expression. Their enjoyment is evident when describing and discussing their current reading. They are confident describing their appreciation of an individual author's style, such as JK Rowling's vivid imagination in the Harry Potter fantasy novels. Pupils' attainment at the end of Year 6 in reading is above the levels expected for their age.
- Pupils with disabilities and those with special educational needs are making similar progress to their classmates. Careful checking of pupils' progress and development accurately identifies specific needs or any gaps in their learning. There is no gap in the achievement and attainment between those eligible for pupil-premium funding and other pupils.
- Increasingly imaginative use of themes to link subjects together helps to make learning more fascinating. For example, visiting nearby Gibside monument and chapel enables pupils to practise their estimating and measuring skills. It also helps to develop their artistic skills in an inspiring outdoor location. Even though learning experiences are increasingly interesting, opportunities are sometimes missed to reinforce and practice pupils' mathematical skills across all subjects.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- A period of effective teaching has not been in place for long enough to fully judge its impact, although the whole staff team now display a strong commitment to school improvement. The good and often inspiring teaching observed in classrooms ensures pupils of all abilities and backgrounds are now achieving well. This includes those pupils who arrive at short notice part-way through their primary education. The emerging pattern of rapid progress and higher achievement is the result of higher expectations and approaches which constantly challenge pupils' thinking.
- An interesting range of visitors and first-hand experiences, problem-solving activities, partner talk and discussions underpin the pupils' excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Staff ensure excellent relationships with pupils. Classrooms are harmonious, stimulating and thought-provoking places in which to learn and work.
- Teaching and classroom support helps pupils to make rapid progress and achieve well when:
 - imaginative, lively approaches capture and hold pupils' interest
 - clear explanations about key learning ensure that all pupils know exactly what is expected of them

- tasks and activities are clearly sequenced, continuously building upon previous learning at a brisk pace
- marking is positive and constructive and provides clear guidance for improvement
- staff encourage pupils to think for themselves, consider all the options and work out solutions.
- When progress in lessons is uneven:
 - teacher's explanations and methods are sometimes too drawn out and the pace of learning varies at different parts of the lesson
 - opportunities are missed for pupils to apply their skills, particularly in mathematics
 - learning does not systematically build upon earlier knowledge and understanding
 - questioning is too general and insufficiently probing or thought-provoking.
- In the Reception class, there is a broad range of interesting opportunities for children to explore and investigate the world both in and outdoors. Active and engaging approaches are used to challenge children's thinking and encourage them to find things out for themselves. For example, detecting clues in a letter to discover the Gruffalo's hidden surprise outdoors in the garden.
- The use of pupil-premium funding is adding to the quality and richness of learning by broadening the range of their experiences and frequency of individual support. Excellent use is made of the surrounding communities, including local businesses, to learn more about the local history and make-up of the environment. For example, drawing maps and painting animals and plants on their walk to the nearby village.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- The high quality of care and support, excellent adult models, high expectations for conduct and clear boundaries for behaviour, ensure that all pupils feel safe and happy. All parents agree. As one pupil remarked, 'Everyone one is happy with each other in this school.'
- The outstanding behaviour of pupils is reflected in their high levels of commitment in lessons and their pride in their own and the school's achievements. Relationships with adults are relaxed and reveal much mutual respect, trust and consideration. Pupils thrive on the responsibility they are given to acquire real-life skills and have a voice in the day-to-day running of the school. For example, suggesting and organising a visit to the Houses of Parliament to listen to a statement by the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the opposition response.
- Pupils display a clear understanding of issues relating to bullying or discrimination. They discuss their own behaviour and attitudes and those of their classmates with much sensitivity. As one pupils observed, 'There is no bullying here.' another added the comment, 'in this loving environment'. Pupils are fully aware of how to avoid risk and danger, such as when using modern technology.
- Pupils thoroughly enjoy coming to school, which is evident in their above average attendance. Assemblies are extremely positive family occasions characterised by a keenness to listen and reflect on their experiences. Their thoughtful and caring attitudes are evident in their commitment to help others, such as their fundraising for the children in a Zambian street school.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher, ably supported by a committed, newly-formed staff team, has been resolute in driving the school towards speedy improvement. Underachievement and underperformance have been successfully tackled. Consequently, a settled staff are quickly building upon and adding to the school strengths to ensure continuous improvement.
- Robust systems are now in place to check pupils' development. This enables the school to accurately judge pupils' skills and rates of progress. Staff are increasingly skilled at using the information to shape activities to match the age, ability and interests of individual pupils.

Although senior leaders demonstrate an accurate view of the school's performance, the logging and scrutiny of the impact of the action taken to improve is sometimes a little too general and not sharply focussed enough on the action needed to sustain rapid improvement.

- Teaching is well-led and managed. Frequent monitoring of the quality of teaching is accurate and perceptive. Staff respond eagerly to well-focussed training, which includes the effective use of local authority expertise to broaden staff experience and skills. Support for the newly qualified is effective. Staff performance targets are carefully linked to pupils' progress and attainment with appropriate rewards for raising achievement.
 - The good and constantly developing curriculum helps pupils develop their skills and extend their knowledge of the world effectively. Nevertheless, opportunities are sometimes missed to reinforce numeracy skills even more across the curriculum. It is highly successful at developing pupils' personal skills. For example, providing older pupils with a residential experience. Increasingly, parents are involved in their children's learning.
 - Staff work hard to make certain all pupils are treated equally and all can achieve their full potential. Thoughtful approaches ensure that those pupils who are potentially vulnerable or at risk are fully involved in all aspects of school life. Any discrimination is tackled decisively and effectively. Good use is made of specialist support agencies to provide the help that individual pupils and families require.
 - Safeguarding arrangements meet requirements, with much first-class practice reinforcing the excellent quality of care and support for pupils.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - The increasingly reflective and self-critical governing body challenges and holds the school to account in open and balanced ways. Its members share the headteacher's quest for excellence. They demonstrate a good grasp of school strengths and areas for improvement. The governing body maintain effective checks on the quality of teaching and classroom support using the school's progress information capably. They are fully aware of the importance of sustaining improvements in the school's performance over time. The performance targets that they set reflect the school's priorities. Financial control is effective including the checking of the impact of pupil-premium funding. The governing body have worked very successfully in partnership with the local authority that currently provides skilled and effective light touch support.
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What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors. A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.

School details

Unique reference number	108393
Local authority	Gateshead
Inspection number	405166

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	99
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Monica Parker
Headteacher	Paul Naughton
Date of previous school inspection	10 March 2011
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