

Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School, Henley-on-Thames

Greys Hill, Henley-on-Thames, Oxfordshire RG9 1SL

Inspection dates

5–6 October 2016

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Sacred Heart Catholic Primary is a friendly and caring school in which pupils are happy and thrive. It embodies its motto 'to grow in wisdom and grace'. There is strong support from parents, several of whom described the school as 'fantastic'.
- School leaders, under the energetic and inspirational leadership of the headteacher and with strong support from the governing body, have brought about rapid improvements in the quality of teaching. Standards have risen across all year groups in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Teaching is good and described as 'fun' by pupils. Children get off to a very secure start in the early years, where the teaching and organisation are strengths.
- Pupils, including those who are disadvantaged or who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, make at least good progress from their different starting points across the school.
- Teachers have mainly responded well to the requirements of the new national curriculum and assessment systems for all subjects. Results in the most recent national tests confirm this.
- Pupils' safety, welfare and personal development are given a high priority by the school. The promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, including British values, permeates all aspects of school life. Pupils are very well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- Pupils are known by staff and their individual needs catered for very well. Pupils feel safe and secure and enjoy coming to school as attested by their regular attendance and eagerness to learn. Their behaviour, positive attitudes and eagerness to learn are exemplary.
- Governance is extremely effective and has contributed in no small way to the rapid improvement of the school.
- The teaching of the most able pupils has been a focus of the school, with some success. Sometimes, however, the most able pupils are not given enough challenging work, which slows their progress.
- Although pupils' results were above national averages in most respects in 2016, no Year 2 pupils were assessed as working at a greater depth in mathematics.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards of achievement for the most able pupils, particularly in key stage 1 mathematics, by:
 - reviewing the curriculum to ensure that it provides sufficient challenge
 - sharing the good practice that exists in the school more widely.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- School leaders and governors have responded decisively and effectively to bring about improvements since the last inspection. Leaders have accurately evaluated the school's strengths and where further improvement is needed. A focus on raising staff expectations and improving the quality of teaching has been effective and standards have risen across the board.
- The headteacher's energy, passion and commitment to the school and its pupils are highly evident and much appreciated by staff, parents and pupils. He has quickly implemented changes that have resulted in greater consistency across the school. For example, all staff consistently adhere to the school's new behaviour policy. Leadership is now shared more widely across the school, with significant and effective involvement from the deputy headteacher and two key stage leaders, who also lead on core subjects. All leaders share a determination to improve further and have contributed to helping to raise standards.
- The school embodies the notion of equalities through all of its work and policies. Pupils are well cared for by staff and pupils, in turn, show caring attitudes towards each other. They learn about tolerance and respect for others. They demonstrate empathy towards those who are different or who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Several parents commented on this in their responses to Parent View and in discussion with an inspector. 'I can't get over how kind everyone is,' said one parent, and 'the diversity of the school adds to the rounded upbringing of my children and their respect for society'.
- Leaders have improved the quality of teaching through more focused and regular checks. Teachers receive pertinent developmental feedback and a programme of tailored training. Teachers praised the support and training provided by the local authority.
- The headteacher and other leaders are keen to improve and have sought advice from other schools. Teachers have collaborated with colleagues from other schools to check the validity of their assessments of pupils' work and to share ideas about teaching and learning.
- Staff work well together and there is a great deal of support for the direction of the school under the current headteacher. Teachers and teaching assistants feel valued and their performance is managed appropriately with good opportunities for training and development.
- Pupils are offered a broad range of subjects with an appropriate emphasis on literacy and numeracy. There is a wide range of before- and after-school clubs, and visits, such as to the Henley Literary Festival and Windsor Castle. Music and physical education are clear strengths of the school. All pupils have opportunities to learn different musical instruments as they move through the school. The choir is very well attended and pupils relish singing, which they do with gusto. Homework is set regularly and provides appropriate challenge for pupils of all abilities, including the most able.

- Physical education and sports premium funding is used well to enhance teachers' skills. This has resulted in greater participation by pupils in physical activities. There is a host of different sporting opportunities and most pupils take part in competitions with other schools; Sacred Heart is very successful in these events. Such opportunities contribute well to pupils' health, well-being and self-confidence.
- Staff promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, including British values, extremely well. All aspects permeate the life of the school, the curriculum and assemblies. Pupils listened carefully and participated well in an assembly that referred to the Lampedusa Cross made from the boat in which many refugees died in 2013. Pupils are given many opportunities for spiritual reflection about their lives and faith. The local parish priest regularly takes assemblies and conducts Mass for the pupils. Pupils also reflect on their learning and are encouraged to explain what they have learned to each other. They are taught about different religions and cultures in their personal, social and health education lessons, religious education and assemblies.
- Pupils talk excitedly about British values. They enjoy taking on leadership roles through, for example, being 'buddies' for younger children, house and sports captains and participating in the school council. All Year 5 pupils participate in the junior Duke of Edinburgh's Award, which helps to promote their personal development and self-confidence.
- Pupils are very well prepared for transition between key stages. For example, each year group has a 'moving up' week where classes get to know their new teachers and pupils in Year 6 attend their new secondary schools. The school ensures that pupils are ready for transition by developing good liaison between teachers and by ensuring that pupils have the necessary skills to cope with the next phase of their education.
- School leaders make effective use of additional pupil premium funds; this is monitored closely by governors. Each eligible pupil has an individual plan with targets. They receive one-to-one and small group teaching and support for equipment, trips and after-school clubs. Teachers ensure that disadvantaged pupils are considered first during termly meetings with the headteacher where pupils' progress is discussed. Teachers and teaching assistants are aware of who the disadvantaged pupils are and monitor their progress carefully in lessons.
- Support for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities has improved since the last inspection. Teachers, rather than teaching assistants, now take more responsibility for working with these pupils. The coordinator checks pupils' progress regularly and changes are made to pupils' individual plans, as necessary. As a result, pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are identified more quickly and they make good progress.
- Links with parents have improved considerably and this is reflected in the positive views of parents; there were 43 positive written comments on Parent View. The majority of respondents were unequivocal in their praise for the new headteacher and for the school. Statements such as 'brilliant school', 'fantastic', 'wonderful', and 'a great school' were common. Parents welcome the opportunity to 'come and watch us at work' that takes place regularly. They are invited to 'stay and play' in Reception and commented that communication has improved in the past two years. Parents receive regular newsletters from the school and, more recently, from governors.

- The local authority has provided timely and appropriate support, particularly in the first year after the previous inspection. It has facilitated support from other schools and undertaken termly visits to check on progress. Local authority advisers have observed lessons alongside the headteacher and helped to validate his judgements of quality.

Governance of the school

- Governance is a real strength. Following the last inspection, governors responded swiftly to review their practice. An external review of governance was undertaken after the previous inspection and followed up this year to determine progress. Governors have adjusted committees and become a more visible presence in the school. They have worked hard to engage parents and make regular visits to school. Governors' visits are linked appropriately to their responsibilities, such as school development plan priorities, or statutory duties such as safeguarding and special educational needs.
- Governors have a clear view about all aspects of the school including school performance information, the quality of teaching and what needs to improve. Governors draw on information from the headteacher, external reviews from, for example, the local authority, and their own observations. They challenge leaders and have been at the forefront of driving improvements in the school since the last inspection. Governors give provision for vulnerable pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, high priority, researching how to best use pupil premium funds. They fulfil all of their statutory duties. While holding school leaders firmly to account, which they do with compassion and understanding, governors are aware of the need to monitor the headteacher's work-life balance.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders have created a caring and inclusive school culture that ensures that pupils are safe and secure. School leaders have established good links with the local authority designated officer and other external services. Governors maintain an appropriate oversight of safeguarding and it is included as an item in governors' meetings. A link governor meets regularly with the school's safeguarding lead.
- Staff have received appropriate training, including in relation to the 'Prevent' duty, and are regularly kept up to date. They know how to report concerns. Pupils say that they feel safe and the vast majority of parents agree. Pupils are taught about keeping safe during assemblies and in lessons.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teaching has improved since the last inspection as a result of leaders' raised expectations. Teachers are held to account for the progress of pupils in their classes. They meet regularly with the headteacher to identify pupils who are falling behind and to plan the next steps for them.
- Teachers consistently apply school policies; for example, in managing behaviour and marking pupils' work. Their relationships with pupils are supportive and encouraging. Pupils feel secure and they are prepared to admit when they are unsure or have made a mistake. They confidently ask questions and demonstrate a real thirst for learning.

- Teachers provide frequent and detailed feedback, using the school's policy, in pupils' books. As a result of teachers' pertinent comments, pupils are usually clear about what they need to do to improve. They strive to respond to teachers' questions and next steps.
- Teaching assistants play an effective role. They have benefited from training, for example, in how to question pupils effectively. This was seen to good effect in a number of classes where teaching assistants asked pupils to explain their ideas and encouraged them to think for themselves. Teaching assistants sometimes work with small groups and are deployed effectively, according to their particular strengths.
- Teachers have secure subject knowledge and model this well for pupils. They encourage pupils to articulate their understanding. Pupils enjoy giving full explanations of their ideas and how they worked something out.
- The teaching of reading has improved under the effective leadership of the literacy coordinator. A drive to establish a love of reading with stimulating activities has inspired pupils. For example, the school celebrated Roald Dahl's 100th birthday anniversary with activities around his characters and stories. Pupils read often and talk eagerly about their books. The most able readers, including boys and girls, read fluently and with expression. They demonstrate a love of reading and enjoy talking about their favourite books and authors.
- Phonics is taught effectively from the Reception class onwards. Staff employ a range of lively methods to help children learn their letters and sounds. Year 1 pupils took great delight in finding cards around the room that contained words with the 'or' sound, such as 'corn', 'thorn' and 'doctor'. The weaker readers in key stage 1 make use of their phonics knowledge to read unfamiliar words. They are making good progress and are given the opportunity to read regularly to adults in school and at home. Most-able readers are developing fluency and read with expression.
- School leaders have identified the need to raise standards for the most able pupils, including those who are disadvantaged. The most able pupils sometimes do not have enough opportunities to embark on more challenging work, as evident in workbooks. This slows down their progress.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding. Pupils are developing as confident, articulate learners. They demonstrate a clear thirst for learning. Pupils are keen to express their ideas but listen attentively to those of their peers and adults. They come to school eagerly and are ready to learn.
- Staff give pupils' welfare a high priority. Each pupil is well known to staff and cared for. Staff are alert to concerns and nip them in the bud. Pupils enjoy healthy meals and have ample opportunities to take part in physical activity and sport.

- Pupils say that they are safe in school and the overwhelming majority of parents agree. Several comments from parents confirmed this; for example, 'the school is a stimulating, safe and perfect learning environment'. Pupils are taught about how to stay safe in different circumstances, such as when crossing the road or using the internet.
- Pupils are aware of the range of forms that bullying can take. They say that bullying is rare and is dealt with quickly by teachers. Pupils look out for each other; for example, they make sure that other pupils are happy in the playground.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. It has improved since the last inspection due to the more consistent application of the school's behaviour policy. One parent said that 'discipline is exceptional'.
- Pupils take great care over the presentation of work in their exercise books and their handwriting is very neat.
- Pupils behave extremely well in classrooms and around the school. They are polite and respectful towards adults and each other. They learn, starting in the early years, to listen to instructions and to tidy up after themselves. They line up sensibly and quickly to go outside. Incidents of misbehaviour are rare. There are a few pupils whose behaviour can be challenging at times. Staff manage the behaviour of these pupils unobtrusively and effectively. The support that pupils receive is effective in improving their behaviour over time.
- The behaviour policy, introduced by the headteacher after the last inspection, is now consistently implemented across the school. Pupils understand and are motivated by the traffic light system where they are rewarded by moving up from green. They enjoy the stars and house points which they receive. They encourage each other to behave well and listen respectfully when their peers or adults are speaking.
- Pupils' attendance is consistently above average and has improved even further over the past few years. The headteacher has successfully worked with parents to help improve the attendance of those pupils, including some disadvantaged pupils, whose attendance was erratic. Pupils enjoy coming to school and settle quickly and without fuss to learn.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Standards have risen in most subjects across the school, with particularly strong improvements in the early years. Most children leave the Reception class with a good level of development and are well prepared for Year 1.
- Pupils' attainment and progress in key stage 1 have risen steadily in the past few years and results at the end of key stage 1 were well above average in reading, writing and mathematics in 2015. Unvalidated 2016 results were also above average, although no pupils attained greater depth in mathematics at the end of Year 2.
- In key stage 2, pupils' progress and attainment have been in line with national averages for all subjects over the past few years. Unvalidated results improved considerably in 2016, and were above the national averages in all external tests. Pupils are well prepared for secondary school.

- Current pupils are making steady progress in all subjects and year groups. Teachers provide work that meets the requirements of the new national curriculum in all subjects. The standard of work seen, for example, in science was appropriately demanding for all pupils.
- The school has worked hard to raise the attainment of the most able pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, with some success. However, outcomes for the most able at the end of key stage 1 were too low in mathematics. School leaders have analysed reasons for this and put strategies in place to ensure that current pupils are challenged to work at greater depth.
- Disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported well and make the same good progress as their peers. The number of disadvantaged pupils is small and in several classes, such as in the past two Year 6 cohorts, disadvantaged pupils also have additional needs. These small numbers have a significant impact on results, particularly because of the relatively small class sizes.

Early years provision

Good

- Provision in the early years has improved considerably since the last inspection. There has been a change of staff and new leadership. Leadership is strong and has brought about clear improvements in the quality of teaching, the curriculum and in the way that children are assessed. Standards at the end of the early years have risen steadily. Unvalidated information shows that last year the proportion of children reaching a good level of development at the end of Reception was above the national average. Children make good progress from their starting points.
- Teaching is effective. Adults track children's progress carefully. A high ratio of adults to children helps to ensure that children get individual attention. The most able children are suitably challenged and make good progress. The current Reception class has a high proportion of children who speak English as an additional language. These children are well supported and they make rapid progress.
- Staff have created a stimulating and well-organised environment in which all areas of learning are planned for. Activities are lively and engage children's interest and concentration, such as when making 'custard pies' outside or hunting for gold coins in the water tray. Adults engage well with children and encourage them to speak and listen carefully. Children have ample opportunities to develop literacy and numeracy skills. For example, they enjoy writing notes or counting objects or making necklace patterns with coloured pasta.
- Children have settled quickly into the Reception class. They behave extremely well and respond quickly to adults' instructions. They are learning to take turns and to work happily alongside their peers.

School details

Unique reference number	123204
Local authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	10019890

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 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	176
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Patrick Fitzpatrick
Headteacher	Mr Gerald Davis
Telephone number	01491 572796
Website	www.sacredheart-henley.co.uk
Email address	office.3820@sacred-heart.oxon.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	12–13 November 2014

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- This is a smaller-than-average primary school. There is one class in each of Years 1 to 6 and a full-time Reception class.
- Most pupils are of White British origin, with small numbers from a range of other ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is below average but increasing. Just under half of the Reception class speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils who are known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is below the national average. The proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan is below the national average.

- The school meets the government's 2015 floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school shares its site with a private pre-school, which was not included in this inspection.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors gathered a wide range of evidence during the inspection, including through observations of teaching, some of which were undertaken with the headteacher and deputy headteacher. Inspectors also scrutinised pupils' work in books across all year groups and subjects.
- Inspectors held meetings with school staff, including the headteacher, other senior leaders and staff in charge of aspects of the school's work. Inspectors spoke with parents at the start of the school day. They spoke with four governors in two meetings. The lead inspector held a telephone conversation with the school's former local authority adviser who had supported the school after the last inspection. Inspectors also met the local parish priest who works with the school.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils during two formal meetings as well as during lessons and breaktimes.
- Inspectors considered a wide range of documentation related to the school's work, including its development plan, self-evaluation report, records of monitoring of teaching and learning, and information about pupils' attainment, progress, attendance and behaviour. Inspectors scrutinised records concerning safeguarding and toured the school site.
- Inspectors analysed the 133 responses and 47 written comments submitted to the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View, during the inspection. They also considered the 15 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire and the school's own recent surveys of pupils' views.

Inspection team

Dr Helena McVeigh, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Andrew Clark	Ofsted Inspector

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