

Sacred Heart Catholic Voluntary Academy

Mere Close, Off Mere Road, Leicester, Leicestershire LE5 3HH

Inspection dates

27–28 February 2018

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Leaders have not acted swiftly enough to address the recent slow progress and low attainment made by some pupils in reading and writing.
- The governing body has not been rigorous enough in challenging leaders over the recent poor outcomes for some pupils.
- School development plans do not contain precise enough actions or success criteria. The governing body cannot therefore hold leaders fully to account for the actions they take.
- Meetings to discuss pupils' progress do not always focus clearly enough on the support pupils need in order for them to make rapid progress and catch up.
- Teachers do not always use pupils' assessment information effectively. Some pupils are not suitably challenged, especially in reading and writing.
- Teachers do not always have high enough expectations of what pupils, including the most able pupils, can achieve. In some classes, pupils with differing abilities complete exactly the same work.
- Teaching assistants are not always deployed effectively to support pupils' learning. There are occasions where they are too passive and therefore miss opportunities to deepen pupils' knowledge and understanding.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils behave well. Their conduct in classrooms and around the school is consistently good. Instances of bullying are extremely rare.
- Staff know pupils and their families very well. Systems to keep pupils safe and well protected are secure and effective.
- Children get off to a good start in the early years. They make strong progress from low and sometimes very low starting points.
- Pupils are prepared well for life in modern Britain. They have a good understanding of faiths and cultures different to their own.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - all development plans contain precise actions and success criteria that accurately reflect the work of leaders, therefore allowing governors to hold leaders fully to account for their areas of responsibility
 - pupil progress meetings focus sharply on what pupils need next in order to make rapid progress.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment so that outcomes for pupils especially in reading and writing, improve by ensuring that:
 - teachers use pupils' assessment information effectively to plan lessons that challenge pupils appropriately, especially in reading and writing
 - teachers have higher expectations of what pupils, including the most able pupils, can achieve
 - teaching assistants are deployed effectively in order to support pupils' learning.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Leaders and the governing body have not acted swiftly enough to address some pupils' recent slow progress and poor attainment, especially in reading and writing. Too many pupils have recently left the school having not reached the expected standards for their age.
- Evidence from meetings scrutinised by inspectors indicates that governors and the trust have not successfully challenged leaders over the recent poor performance of some pupils. While some questions have been asked of leaders, their responses have not been challenged rigorously enough.
- School development plans are not precise enough. They do not contain clear actions or success criteria. Consequently, governors and the trust cannot hold leaders stringently to account for the actions they take in their area of responsibility.
- Pupil progress meetings are not as effective as they could be. While teachers discuss the progress of pupils with senior leaders, the meetings do not focus sharply enough on what extra support each pupil needs to receive in order to catch up rapidly.
- Leaders have ensured that there is a broad and balanced curriculum. Inspectors scrutinised pupils' 'learning adventure' workbooks and saw evidence of pupils experiencing topics in geography, history and science. There are also frequent opportunities for pupils to develop creative and musical skills.
- The leader responsible for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities has a very good understanding of the school's statutory duties. There are regular opportunities for teachers and teaching assistants to meet with the leader and discuss the progress of pupils. The leader agrees that some, but not all, pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are currently making good progress.
- The leaders responsible for the pupil premium funding (pupil premium champions) have been proactive in ensuring that the recommendations from a recent external review of the pupil premium funding have been put into place swiftly. For example, leaders have ensured that disadvantaged pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, receive extra educational support, increased parental involvement and increased opportunities to experience other activities, for example raft and den building, fire making and cooking. Leaders agree that some, but not all, disadvantaged pupils are currently making good progress.
- Subject and phase leaders have had some training in their areas of responsibility. They have had some success in driving improvements. For example, more pupils are now experiencing problem solving and reason activities in mathematics and the school's new marking and feedback policy has been successfully embedded across the school.
- The leader responsible for the physical education and sport funding has ensured it is allocated effectively. Pupils experience a wide variety of activities and after-school clubs in, for example, tag rugby, boccia, basketball, football and athletics. There are also numerous opportunities for pupils to compete against other schools through the school's membership of the local schools' sports partnership.

- Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. They have a very good understanding of faiths different to their own. Recent visitors to school from numerous countries have shared aspects of their lives and languages with pupils. Consequently, pupils have also deepened their understanding of cultures different to their own.
- Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school. One parent commented, 'It's an all-round excellent primary school that teaches the educational curriculum alongside the necessary skills and care for others.'

Governance of the school

- The governing body has been unsuccessful in holding leaders to account for the recent poor performance of some pupils. Leaders' development plans do not contain relevant actions and success criteria to enable governors to check on their progress. Minutes of governing body meetings show that governors have not challenged leaders effectively regarding some pupils' recent low outcomes.
- The governing body receives a termly audit from the trust's professional challenge partner regarding, for example, the quality of teaching, pupil progress and the appropriateness of school policies. The audits are detailed. However, records from these meetings indicate that governors have been too accepting of leaders' reasons for some pupils' poor performance.
- Governors have received appropriate training, for example in safer recruitment, the 'Prevent' duty and analysing pupil progress information. The chair has made visits to the school in order to check on the progress made in pupils' workbooks. These findings are fed back to other governors and the professional challenge partner in order for them to be kept up to date.
- The experienced governing body is dedicated to the school, its staff and pupils. They are determined to succeed.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders have ensured that all relevant checks are made on adults before they are allowed to start working or volunteering at the school. Records are kept in a good order and are checked frequently by the chair of governors to ensure that they meet statutory requirements.
- There is a strong safeguarding culture at the school. Staff have received relevant training in, for example, child protection, online safety and the prevention of female genital mutilation. Consequently, adults at the school are alert to concerns regarding pupils' welfare.
- Leaders have developed a robust online system for recording and acting upon reported safeguarding concerns. There is a tenacious approach to ensuring that pupils and their families receive any extra support from outside agencies promptly. Leaders and teachers know the needs and circumstances of individual pupils and their families extremely well.

- All parents who responded to Ofsted's questionnaire 'Parent View' agreed that their children were well looked after and felt safe.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Over time, the quality of teaching has been too variable and has failed to meet the needs of all pupils. As a result, some pupils have made insufficient progress in reading and writing as they have moved through key stage 2.
- Teachers do not use pupils' assessment information consistently well. In some classes, inspectors found evidence in pupils' workbooks where pupils of differing abilities had completed the same work. Consequently, in these lessons pupils make slower progress because they find the work either too hard or too easy.
- Teachers' expectations of what pupils, including the most able pupils, can achieve are not always high enough. For example, in a Year 6 writing lesson it was unclear what the most able pupils should do next to improve their writing after they had completed their original task.
- Teaching assistants are not consistently well deployed across the school. In the most effective lessons, teaching assistants challenge pupils by asking questions that help to deepen pupils' thinking. In the less effective lessons, teaching assistants were observed sitting listening to the teacher when they could have been supporting pupils with their learning.
- Leaders have ensured that there is a good system in place to assess and track pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Teachers use and update the online system frequently. This information is carefully analysed and leaders can clearly identify the pupils, year groups and subjects that are performing well or require extra support.
- Phonics is taught effectively. For example, in Year 1 the teacher was skilfully exposing pupils to the 'ear', 'eer' and 'ere' sound. Pupils had various texts in which to find words containing these sounds and then practise writing them down. Inspection evidence and information provided by the school suggests that a larger proportion of pupils will achieve the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics check than has previously been the case.
- Pupils' learning is most effective when teachers use assessment information accurately and plan carefully for pupils of differing abilities. For example, in Year 2, pupils were successfully accessing appropriate texts and using a glossary to find, record and understand the meanings of unfamiliar words.
- Classrooms and corridors are tidy, bright and stimulating. Teachers frequently celebrate pupils' achievements through displays and provide materials that support learning. For example, reminders of how to spell frequently used words and key number facts are displayed in many classrooms.
- Teachers have had opportunities to work with other schools from the trust and share good practice. They have also worked with colleagues from Sacred Heart to moderate pupils' work. This helps to ensure that the judgements teachers make about pupils' attainment and progress are accurate.

- There are examples of good practice that are evident in some classes and year groups. This practice is shared with other staff at the school in order for them to develop professionally.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are confident and respectful. They spoke enthusiastically with inspectors regarding their schoolwork and showed enthusiasm for different subjects. For example, pupils in Year 5 were enjoying making masks in preparation for World Book Day and pupils in Year 3 were able to retell accurately the story of the Good Samaritan using a storyboard and captions.
- Leaders have ensured that pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe when they are, for example, online, crossing roads and riding bikes. Visits by the local police and fire services have further developed pupils' knowledge of people who help us and keep us safe.
- Pupils spoke enthusiastically regarding the opportunity to visit, for example, the Space Centre and Sea Life Centre to deepen their scientific knowledge. Pupils in Year 6 have the opportunity to develop outdoor and adventurous skills by attending a week-long residential in Norfolk.
- There are a number of after-school clubs that allow pupils to participate in a wide range of activities including gymnastics, coding, dance and football. Singing is a particular strength. Inspectors were taken aback by the quality of singing heard during a key stage 2 hymn practice and from the after-school choir.
- Pupils have access to the popular breakfast club. There is a range of appropriate activities on offer coupled with options for a healthy breakfast. As a result, pupils who attend are ready to start the day.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good in classrooms, corridors and when playing outside at break and lunchtimes. Pupils are adamant that instances of poor behaviour are rare and that the 'yellow and red card system' works well. Detailed behaviour records kept by the deputy headteacher indicate that bullying and racist incidents are extremely rare.
- Relationships between adults and pupils are extremely positive. There is a harmonious atmosphere, with pupils quickly following adults' instructions. This allows lessons to run smoothly and without interruption.
- Older pupils enjoy the extra responsibility of being school chaplains, anti-bullying mentors and reading 'buddies' for younger pupils. There is a wide range of awards available for pupils to receive, for example in displaying good manners and completing pieces of work to a high standard.

- Leaders have developed effective systems to improve levels of absence and persistent absence. While current absence levels are slightly above the national average, they are reducing.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Recent end of key stage 2 tests show that not enough pupils, including the most able pupils, made good progress from their respective key stage 1 starting points. This is especially the case for reading and writing. For example, in 2016 and 2017 pupils' progress in reading and writing was in the bottom 20% of schools nationally. However, pupils leaving the school in 2017 made much better progress in mathematics than their 2016 counterparts.
- In 2017, the proportion of pupils leaving key stage 1 who achieved the expected and higher standards in reading, writing and mathematics was below the national averages. In recent years, the proportion of pupils who achieved the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics check has also been below the national average.
- Inspection evidence and assessment information provided by the school indicates that there are a number of pupils who are currently not working at age-related expectations. However, some pupils including disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are starting to make much faster progress. This is particularly the case in Years 4 and 6. Standards are therefore rising.
- In 2017, the proportions of pupils achieving the expected and higher standard in the end of key stage 2 spelling, punctuation and grammar test has improved. These figures are now in line with the national averages.
- In 2017, the proportions of the most able pupils leaving key stage 2 who achieved the higher standard in reading, writing and mathematics rose significantly.

Early years provision

Good

- Children enter the nursery with skills and knowledge below and sometimes well below those expected for their age. Inspection evidence and assessment information provided by the school suggests that the majority of these children make swift progress and catch up by the time they enter the Reception class.
- In 2017, the proportion of children, including disadvantaged children, who achieved a good level of development and also attended the school's nursery was higher than the national average. These children made very good progress and were therefore ready to start in Year 1. However, a number of children who joined the school at the start of the Reception year from other nurseries, did not reach a good level of development. Consequently, the overall proportion of early years children who achieved a good level of development was below the national average.
- Transition arrangements for parents and children starting the nursery and Reception class are strong. There are opportunities for parents and children to visit the school during the summer term. The early years leader visits children in their nursery setting and collects up-to-date assessment information. Information booklets are sent to parents, which they can complete with their child's strengths and interests.

Consequently, staff have a very good overview of each child before they start at the school.

- Links with outside agencies are good. For example, the speech and language team, school nurse and early years SEN and/or disabilities specialists are available to support children effectively if they require extra help and support.
- There is a safe, warm and nurturing environment in the early years. There are well-established routines and positive relationships that exist between adults and children. Consequently, children respect adults and behave well. Leaders have ensured that staff have received relevant training in safeguarding and paediatric first aid.
- There are wide varieties of planned activities that interest children and sustain their attention both inside and outside. For example, during the inspection groups of children were developing their understanding of number and money by purchasing items from a shop, recognising and adding coins.
- Adults frequently assess children's progress and keep appropriate records. This ensures that next steps in learning are planned for carefully. Teachers challenge children effectively and sensitively, encouraging them to try. The quality of teaching and assessment is therefore good.
- Teaching assistants are not always deployed effectively. For example, there were missed opportunities to support children's learning when a group of children were exploring books in the reading area.
- Parents are overwhelmingly positive regarding the early years, with one parent commenting, 'My child has progressed well with excellent support from the teaching staff.'

School details

Unique reference number	138081
Local authority	Leicester
Inspection number	10041599

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	432
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Edward Hayes
Headteacher	Catherine Hayles
Telephone number	0116 262 4418
Website	www.sacredheart.leicester.sch.uk
Email address	office@sacredheart.leicester.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	6–7 November 2014

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- In 2017, the school met the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' progress in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- The school is much larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportions of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and those pupils who speak English as an additional language are much higher than average.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is higher than average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is above average.
- The school is a member of the Corpus Christi Catholic Trust.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed lessons in all classes. Inspectors examined a wide variety of pupils' workbooks from a range of subjects.
- Inspectors held a range of meetings with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, subject and other leaders, the school's professional challenge partner and the chair and vice-chair of the governing body. Inspectors spoke with pupils in groups, in lessons and around the school, and listened to them read. Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in classrooms, around the school and at break and lunch times.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documents including minutes of the trust and governing body meetings, current assessment information provided by the school, the school development plan, self-evaluation and records relating to safeguarding.
- Inspectors talked with parents before school and examined the 24 responses to the Ofsted questionnaire, Parent View. There were zero responses to Ofsted's pupil questionnaire and 26 to Ofsted's staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

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