

Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School and Nursery

Merry Hill Road, Bushey, WD23 1SU

Inspection dates 11–12 June 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Children have a successful start to school and make good progress in the Nursery and in Reception. Pupils continue to make good progress through Years 1 to 6.
- After a brief period of decline, attainment in English and mathematics has improved and is once again above average.
- Teaching is mostly good, and there are examples of outstanding practice.
- Teachers set high expectations for pupils' learning and behaviour, their explanations are clear and their effective questioning and marking promote pupils' learning well.
- Teachers set demanding tasks that are well suited to pupils' abilities and learning needs.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. In some lessons, their attitudes to learning and their behaviour are exemplary.
- Pupils feel safe and very well cared for by staff.
- An experienced headteacher provides good leadership and is well focused on raising achievement and improving teaching.
- The headteacher and staff have created a very caring and positive school environment for pupils to learn and develop in.
- Other key leaders make a valuable contribution to raising achievement and improving teaching.
- Pupils enjoy an interesting range of learning activities with music and sport being strengths.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Occasionally pupils are not moved on to the main learning task quickly enough.
- Teachers are not consistently demonstrating successful writing to pupils in all classes.
- Attendance levels are only average.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed teaching and learning in 25 lessons, some of which were seen together with the headteacher and deputy headteacher.
- They held discussions with the headteacher, staff, parents, representatives of the local authority, governors and pupils.
- The inspectors took account of the 73 responses to the online survey (Parent View) and the findings of the school's own parental survey.
- Responses to an inspection questionnaire from 27 staff were analysed.
- The inspectors examined school policies, information about pupils' attainment and progress, teachers' planning of learning, pupils' work and the school's planning for improvement.

Inspection team

Derek Watts, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Jackie Easter

Additional Inspector

Alison Footman

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a larger than average-sized primary school which incorporates specific provision for children of nursery school age.
- About three quarters of the pupils are White British. Other pupils come from a range of ethnic heritage with Irish and any other White background being the next largest groups.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is well below average. The proportion supported through school action plus or a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- A well below average proportion of the pupils is eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for pupils in local authority care, those known to be eligible for free school meals or those with a parent in the services
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which represent the minimum standards for progress and attainment

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching and learning by making sure that:
 - learning in all lessons proceeds at a quick pace and pupils are swiftly moved on to the main task.
 - the practice of teachers' demonstrating good writing techniques to the pupils, that is used so successfully in some classes, is extended throughout the school.
- Continue to work to promote good attendance and raise it to above average.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children enter the Nursery with skills above those typically expected for their age. In Nursery and Reception, children make good progress in all the areas of learning because of good teaching and the interesting range of indoor and outdoor activities provided.
- Attainment by the end of Year 6 dipped to average levels in 2011 and not all pupils made really rapid progress through Key Stage 2. Frequent changes in staffing contributed to this decline. Effective action has been taken to accelerate pupils' progress in Key Stage 2 and ensure that pupils now consistently reach the standards they are capable of.
- Pupils are making good progress in Key Stages 1 and 2 and their attainment is generally above average in English and mathematics by the time they leave.
- The more-able pupils make good progress because they are set challenging and demanding activities. As a result, the proportion of pupils likely to attain the higher levels this year has increased.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress because of the well-planned and specific support they receive.
- In 2012, the few Year 6 pupils supported by the pupil premium attained lower standards than the other pupils in reading, writing and mathematics. These pupils were about 18 months behind the others in reading and mathematics and 10 months behind in writing. The school has used this funding to provide additional teaching support to help ensure that pupils eligible for the funding increasingly make progress at least in line with the others.
- Pupils make good progress in speaking and listening because teachers provide plenty of opportunities for them to discuss their learning in pairs or small groups.
- Pupils make good progress in acquiring essential reading skills. They enjoy reading the wide range of books on offer at school. The results of the phonics (linking sounds and letters) reading check for Year 1 pupils in 2012 were much higher than average.
- Positive steps have been taken to raise pupils' achievement in writing. In Year 1, pupils wrote some well constructed examples of information texts about the 'Big Bad Wolf'. In their writing, they used headings, questions and description to good effect. Handwriting in the school is developing very well, with Year 1 pupils forming letters correctly and many joining. Year 3 wrote detailed extended pieces about dragons. They structured their work into paragraphs and included interesting information about the appearance, habits and personality of their mythical creature.
- Pupils make good progress in acquiring and applying mathematical skills. In a highly effective lesson in Year 6, for example, pupils used a range of methods to investigate the number of blades of grass in a given area of grassland. They worked well together in a systematic approach.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is typically good and this has a positive impact on pupils' achievement. There are examples of outstanding practice. In the outstanding lessons, pupils are inspired by the teacher's enthusiasm and strong subject expertise. Tasks are challenging and exciting. Pupils are highly productive and learn at a rapid pace.
 - Teachers successfully promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. They create a positive classroom climate for learning and establish strong relationships with pupils. Pupils are cooperative and show consideration and respect for others. Their ability to work collaboratively is very well developed.
 - In the Nursery and Reception classes, children are provided with a wide range of stimulating indoor and outdoor activities. They receive well-focused teaching from adults. In addition to this, there are good opportunities for children to explore, be creative and learn independently.
 - Teachers and teaching assistants expect pupils to do their best and behave well. The pupils respond positively to these expectations. Teachers' explanations, instructions and demonstrations are clear and informative. Questioning is used effectively to promote pupils' thinking and to check their understanding of new learning.
 - Teachers make effective use of the information about pupils' attainment to plan their teaching and to match tasks to pupils' different abilities. As a result, pupils are challenged well and their interest is sustained. They make good progress in acquiring knowledge and deepening their understanding.
 - Pupils' speaking and listening skills are promoted well. Teachers provide well planned opportunities for pupils to discuss their learning. Essential reading skills, including phonics (letters and the sounds they make), are effectively taught through a regular and well-structured programme.
 - Writing is also taught well. Teachers' good support for handwriting has had a positive impact on pupils' presentation. Pupils in Year 1 are often writing with a fluent and joined hand. Teachers choose exciting topics which inspire and motivate pupils to write. Visual stimuli are used well to generate ideas for writing. In story planning, pupils 'map out' what is to be included before writing their story. Pupils have good opportunities to plan and draft their writing using a range of methods. In the very best lessons the teachers demonstrate successful writing techniques as a model to pupils. However, this effective practice is not yet used consistently in all classes.
 - The teaching of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is effective. Activities and support are closely suited to pupils' learning needs. Teaching assistants are used to good effect in guiding and supporting pupils' learning.
 - The school has improved marking and the setting of learning targets for pupils since the last inspection. Pupils know how well they are doing and understand the next steps in their learning. Teachers' marking acknowledges good work and includes constructive comments to help pupils' to improve. Pupils say that teachers' marking and feedback are very helpful.
 - Occasionally, pupils' learning does not move at a quick enough pace. This happens when teachers' introductions are too long or too much time is spent consolidating previous learning
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rather than moving pupils on to new learning.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The school has successfully maintained and built on the good behaviour and safety reported in the last inspection.
- Parents who responded to the online survey, Parent View, strongly agreed that their children were safe and well looked after. They also stated that the school promotes good behaviour. The inspection findings support these positive views.
- Children in the Nursery classes settle well into the school because of the warm and positive relationships established with adults. Children enjoy the exciting activities provided as they learn and play together.
- Pupils show enthusiasm and interest for learning and clearly enjoy the wide range of activities provided. Typical pupil comments were, 'lessons are interesting', 'we learn something new every day' and 'clubs and trips are great'.
- Pupils are well behaved in lessons and around the school. In some lessons, pupils' attitudes to learning, their behaviour and relationships with others were exemplary. The school's records of incidents show that behaviour is typically good over time. There have been no exclusions in recent years.
- Pupils have clear understanding of bullying and the different forms it can take, including name calling, physical bullying and cyber bullying. Pupils reported to inspectors that bullying in the school was rare. They were confident that any incidents, including bullying, would be swiftly dealt with.
- The school has clear systems for monitoring and promoting good attendance. A few families are not fully supporting the school's efforts to improve attendance. Attendance levels in this school should be higher than average.

The leadership and management are good

- Leaders and managers are successfully promoting good achievement for pupils, good teaching and pupils' behaviour and safety.
 - The headteacher and staff have created very caring, safe and positive school environment for pupils to learn and develop. Pupils, parents and staff are rightly very positive about the school's atmosphere and ethos.
 - The headteacher has worked hard to improve pupils' achievement and teaching. Other key leaders, including the deputy headteacher and leaders of English, mathematics and the Early Years Foundation Stage all play an effective role in checking performance and improving their
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areas of responsibility.

- The development and monitoring of teaching receive good attention. Senior leaders observe lessons and provide constructive feedback to teachers. There are effective procedures for appraising staff performance and developing their professional skills. Targets to improve performance and training are carefully linked to pupil's progress and to the school's improvement priorities. For example, there has been considerable training provided to strengthen the teaching of writing. This training has had a positive impact on pupils' progress.
 - The local authority has an accurate understanding of the school's performance. There has been a good blend of challenge and support in helping its journey of improvement from a brief period of decline.
 - An interesting range of learning activities is provided to promote good achievement and personal development for pupils. Opportunities for music and sport are clear strengths.
 - All pupils have access to the full range of activities provided, and the staff strive to ensure that different groups of pupils all do as well as they can. There are no signs of any discrimination in the school.
 - Pupil premium funding has been properly planned and allocated. Additional support has been provided to help eligible pupils and to accelerate their progress

 - **The governance of the school:**
 - Governance is effective.
 - Governors have a clear overview of pupils' attainment and progress and how these compare to schools nationally.
 - Through clear reports from the headteacher, they have an accurate view of the quality of teaching and what is done to improve it.
 - The governors' clear understanding of the school's performance enables them to challenge the leadership and hold the school to account.
 - Governors are up to date with recent requirements relating to the management of staff performance, and ensure that promotion and salary are linked to the progress that pupils make.
 - They manage finances effectively, and check that the pupil premium is properly spent.
 - Governors attend appropriate training courses to increase their effectiveness.
 - Effective measures are taken to ensure that all safeguarding requirements are met.
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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	<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	117488
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	403328

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	312
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mike Chambers
Headteacher	Rita Cooper
Date of previous school inspection	4 February 2008
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