

Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School

Old London Road, Hastings, East Sussex TN35 5NA

Inspection dates

1–2 November 2017

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	Outstanding

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leaders have created a school community where staff, governors and parents work together positively to ensure that pupils have every opportunity to thrive academically, socially and emotionally.
- Following a long period of slow decline, the current leadership team is rapidly improving the quality of teaching so that it is now good.
- Good teaching has led to improved outcomes for pupils in all key stages. Overall attainment in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 2 is above average. Furthermore, the proportion of pupils who meet the required standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check has improved dramatically.
- Disadvantaged pupils and those pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities make good progress because of the effective additional support.
- Safeguarding is effective. Leaders and governors are tenacious and unrelenting in ensuring that every possible action is taken to keep pupils safe.
- Children make a good start to their education in the early years. Parents praise the smooth transition to school and the support that the youngest children receive from their 'best buddies' in Year 6.
- Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. There are outstanding opportunities to help them develop personally into mature citizens who are well equipped for the next stage of their education and life in modern Britain.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced and promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very well.
- In recent years, outcomes, while improving, have been stronger in reading and writing than in mathematics. Not enough of the most able pupils achieve the higher standards in mathematics at the end of key stage 2.
- Leaders do not have a clear overview of how pupils' skills are developed and assessed in subjects other than English and mathematics. As a result, the progress that pupils make in different subjects is variable.
- Subject leaders have limited opportunities to check standards and lead improvements in their areas of responsibility. This restricts the impact they can have on raising standards.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve outcomes in mathematics, especially for the most able pupils, by:
 - ensuring that all pupils have regular opportunities to develop their reasoning skills
 - tracking the work of pupils with high prior attainment to ensure that they are making rapid progress.
- Develop the role of subject leaders so they have a greater impact on raising standards across the curriculum, by:
 - ensuring that curriculum plans clearly identify how pupils will develop their skills in all subjects
 - accurately assessing how well pupils improve their knowledge, skills and understanding in subjects other than English and mathematics
 - monitoring the quality of teaching in subjects other than English and mathematics
 - sharing the best practice within the school with other members of staff.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The school has a strong culture where everyone works together for the good of the pupils who attend. Determined leaders, dedicated staff, wise governors and the many parents who feel part of the school community all contribute to Sacred Heart's success.
- Parents are overwhelmingly happy about the school. One parent told inspectors, 'it feels like a family', while another parent commented, 'You couldn't ask for anything more from a school.'
- The last full inspection of the school was 11 years ago, when the school was judged to be outstanding. Since that time there had been a slow decline in standards and the quality of teaching. This decline has been during a time when national expectations in primary education have risen significantly.
- When the current headteacher was appointed in 2012, he set about raising standards and improving teaching. The headteacher works well with the deputy headteacher. They have skills and attributes that complement each other well and have enabled the school to improve rapidly under their leadership.
- The headteacher is unwavering in the way he promotes equality for the pupils in his care. Despite many challenges, he has been steadfast in his view that every child deserves to be cared for, nurtured and helped to achieve well.
- The headteacher has used performance management effectively to improve teaching over time. Staff value the training they receive and this has had a demonstrable impact on raising standards. For example, over time the proportion of pupils who reach the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check has improved significantly.
- Leaders' current evaluations of the school's strengths and weaknesses are accurate. Their plans for improvement focus on the right things and set clear milestones about when things will be achieved.
- The robust pupil premium strategy is reviewed regularly as pupils' barriers to learning change. This funding is very effectively helping disadvantaged pupils to catch up quickly with other pupils nationally.
- Leadership of provision for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is good. There are strong links with other agencies and good transition arrangements to help these pupils to succeed when they leave Sacred Heart. When it is received, additional funding for these pupils is used effectively.
- The primary sports premium is used very effectively. There has increased participation in the wide range of extra-curricular clubs, and more pupils have been encouraged to engage in competitive sport as a result. Teachers' skills in teaching dance and gym have also improved.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced. It promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding very well and provides many memorable experiences. These include an annual residential visit to Carrot Wood, and opportunities to work with artists in the locality and with specialist scientists at the local Catholic secondary school.

- Despite the rich curriculum, there is some inconsistency in the quality of planned learning in some subjects. For example, pupils achieve very high standards in art because the curriculum is well planned and learning builds on what pupils know and can do. However, there is greater inconsistency in the teaching and progress that pupils make in geography and design and technology.
- Some subject leaders, such as the leader for mathematics, are knowledgeable and set a strong example in their areas of responsibility. However, they are not having a demonstrable impact on raising standards in their subjects throughout the school. This is because they lack the opportunity, time and guidance to do this well. Senior leaders are aware of this and have plans in place to make improvements.
- Shortly after the headteacher joined in 2012, the local authority identified that the school was underperforming. However, the local authority did little at the time to support improvements. In more recent years, local authority advisers have offered highly effective support and challenge to tackle significant and complex issues around safeguarding. Furthermore, termly visits by a leadership consultant are proving effective in helping leaders to accelerate the pace of improvement.

Governance of the school

- Governance is effective.
- The new chair of the governing body is building on the strong foundations set by her predecessor. She has a secure knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and of the governing body's safeguarding responsibilities.
- The governing body has recruited new members with relevant experience, skills and knowledge to continue to challenge leaders to make improvements.
- Governors receive valuable and helpful reports from a range of leaders. They clearly challenge leaders to make further improvements.
- Governors visit the school regularly to check things for themselves. They collect the views of parents and pupils regularly and respond appropriately to feedback.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders have created a culture where safeguarding is given the highest priority. Adults meticulously record any concerns about pupils' well-being. Senior leaders work very closely with other agencies such as early help and social care. Referrals to other agencies are highly detailed, timely and effective.
- Leaders diligently record all their decisions and actions. Communication with parents and other professionals is clearly recorded.
- Staff are very aware of their safeguarding responsibilities because of regular and effective training. Pupils say they feel safe at school and parents are also confident that this is the case.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Very positive relationships between teachers and pupils encourage pupils to want to work hard and do their best. Teachers clearly explain to pupils what they need to do and why they are doing it.
- Almost no learning time is lost. Classrooms are very purposeful and expectations are high. Pupils move around the classroom and from one activity to the next with no fuss.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and use this to ask pupils questions that challenge their thinking and check their understanding. Pupils know how well they are doing because of the positive comments and constructive feedback they receive from teachers.
- Tasks are normally very well matched to the needs of pupils. Increasingly, pupils are able to select work with different levels of difficulty themselves. Most pupils successfully choose the work that is just right for them. Some of the most able pupils told inspectors that even the most challenging work in mathematics is sometimes too easy.
- Teaching assistants provide helpful additional support and challenge when pupils are working individually or in small groups. This helps pupils to learn well. In some classes, teaching assistants are less effective during whole-class discussions and explanations.
- The teaching of reading has a high priority. Targeted phonics teaching in key stage 1 has successfully helped more pupils reach the required standard. Throughout the school the reading-challenge incentive encourages pupils to read frequently. Older pupils choose a variety of challenging texts to read and enjoy.
- A current focus on the teaching of mathematics is helping pupils to make faster progress. They have frequent opportunities to practise their fluency with number and to solve problems. Some classes do not have enough opportunities to develop their mathematical reasoning skills. This is preventing pupils from achieving the highest standards.
- Teachers help pupils to develop their knowledge well across the curriculum through interesting topics and activities. In some subjects pupils develop their skills well. For example, inspectors saw pupils developing their skills of chronology and deduction well. However, in some subjects such as geography and design and technology, teachers do not plan how to teach the necessary skills progressively. Instead they focus on providing interesting discrete tasks and projects.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Older pupils play a significant role in making the school an extremely happy and purposeful place to learn. All Year 6 pupils are prefects. They are busy and highly industrious pupils who act with a sense of responsibility that is beyond their years.
- Pupils take great pride in their school. Pupils voted onto the school council take great

pleasure in talking about the changes they have made to the school, such as improvements to the playground spaces.

- There are very few racist or bullying incidents. When they do occur they are diligently recorded and appropriate action is taken. Pupils do say that very occasionally pupils are unkind to each other but they feel that adults will always sort things out.
- Pupils have good knowledge about how to keep themselves safe, including online. They enjoy when visitors such as Childline come into school and give them important messages about how to stay safe, and can instantly recall key information.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Sacred Heart is an oasis of calm. Pupils move around the school with great maturity and a sense of purpose.
- Pupils are extremely polite and courteous to visitors and each other.
- Lunch and breaktimes are happy times to play and socialise. Pupils are busy. Adults have very high expectations and pupils rise to these.
- Behaviour in classrooms is exemplary. Time in lessons is used very effectively because pupils are always focused on the task at hand. Pupils who can find it difficult to manage their own behaviour are very well supported. They thrive at Sacred Heart and behave well.
- Pupils' levels of attendance are above average and improving. More pupils came to school regularly last year than have done for the previous three years. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils who are absent frequently has decreased. As a result, the attendance of disadvantaged pupils is also improving.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Current pupils are making good progress in reading, writing and mathematics in all year groups.
- The progress that pupils make in reading, writing and mathematics during key stage 2 is broadly average. In 2017, the progress these pupils made in reading was significantly stronger.
- Attainment at the end of key stage 1 and key stage 2 in reading, writing and mathematics is currently improving year on year. At the end of key stage 2 it is above average in reading and writing, and average in mathematics.
- The proportion of pupils achieving the 'greater depth' standard is not improving as quickly, especially in mathematics. Some of the most able pupils do not feel challenged in mathematics.
- The vast majority of pupils now meet the required standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check because the teaching of phonics has improved.
- Where they exist, gaps in attainment between girls and boys are closing quickly.

- Pupil premium funding has been used effectively to improve the attainment and progress of disadvantaged pupils. In most year groups, disadvantaged pupils are doing as well as others in the school. Where this is not the case, it is because some disadvantaged pupils additionally have SEN and/or disabilities.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make strong progress from their starting points in a range of subjects and in their personal confidence. A few make exceptional progress due to highly effective teaching and support.
- There is some variation in the progress pupils make in other subject areas. For example, pupils make outstanding progress and achieve high standards in art. Conversely, attainment in subjects such as geography and design and technology is not as strong because the development of pupils' skills is not planned well enough.

Early years provision

Good

- Leadership of the early years is good. The school has worked hard to create an appropriate learning environment for its temporary additional Reception class.
- Children get a good start to their education at Sacred Heart. Adults have clear routines and expectations. As a result, children settle quickly into school life. Children make good progress in their personal and social development and play together happily for sustained periods.
- Children, including the most able, make good progress. The proportion of children who reach a good level of achievement at the end of the Reception Year has improved over time, and in July 2017 was well above the national average. As a result, children are prepared well for Year 1.
- Teaching is good in the early years. Adults have high expectations of children. Board games help children develop their social skills, including taking turns. Children make good progress in their writing because adults are very clear in their explanations of how children should form their letters.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced. Classrooms provide children with good access to a wide range of interesting and stimulating activities and resources. For example, having read 'The gingerbread man', almost half the class set about trying to build different bridges and towers to get their gingerbread man over the pretend river.
- Parents are very happy with how quickly their children have settled into school. Year 6 'best buddies' help children to feel confident in their new surroundings. Leaders work hard to establish good relationships with local nurseries. Children who have SEN and/or disabilities are very well supported before they start school.
- Leaders work well with other professionals such as speech and language therapists and paediatric nurses. As a result, plans to support children who have special educational need and/or disabilities are well thought out and comprehensive.

School details

Unique reference number	114575
Local authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	10034786

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

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	237
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Maureen Georgiou
Headteacher	Mr Joseph Hellett
Telephone number	01424 429494
Website	www.sacredheartastings.co.uk
Email address	head@sacred-heart.e-sussex.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	1 November 2006

Information about this school

- Sacred Heart is smaller than the average-sized primary school. There is one class in each year group. However, in September 2017 the school opened an additional Reception class at relatively short notice. This will be a 'bulge' year group for the next seven years.
- The headteacher took up his post in September 2012.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is smaller than that found nationally.
- The majority of pupils have White British backgrounds; however, nearly one quarter of pupils are from other minority groups.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is below that found nationally. However, the proportion of pupils who have an education, health and care plan is in line with national figures.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its

website.

- The school meets the government floor standards, which set out the minimum expectations for pupils' progress and attainment in primary schools by the end of key stage 2.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was conducted under section 8 no formal designation arrangements due to concerns about a decline in performance since the previous section 5 inspection 11 years ago. On the first day of the inspection, Her Majesty's Inspector deemed the inspection to be a full inspection under section 5 of the Education Act, 2005.
- Inspectors observed learning in all classes, talked to pupils about their work and looked at pupils' workbooks. During many of the visits to classrooms, inspectors were accompanied by the headteacher or another senior leader.
- Her Majesty's Inspectors met regularly throughout the inspection with the headteacher and other senior leaders. They also held meetings with teachers responsible for different subject areas.
- The lead inspector met with two representatives of the governing body, including the current chair. He also had telephone conversations with two separate representatives of the local authority.
- To gain their views of the school, inspectors spoke to pupils extensively in classes, around the school and at breaktimes and lunchtimes.
- Inspectors spoke to parents on the playground at the beginning of the inspection and considered 47 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View. There was no opportunity for parents to complete any free-text responses.
- Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of school documentation. This included information about safeguarding, school improvement, the curriculum and the quality of teaching.

Inspection team

Lee Selby, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Mark Cole

Her Majesty's Inspector

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