

Inspection of a good school: Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School

Windermere Road, Southend-on-Sea, Essex SS1 2RF

Inspection dates:

21 and 22 June 2022

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of good as a result of this initial (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a full inspection were carried out now. The next inspection will therefore be a full (section 5) inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School are kind hearted and courteous. They learn how to behave this way from staff, who build warm, supportive relationships with them. Pupils follow this positive example and behave respectfully towards each other. The 'going for gold' system encourages pupils to behave well. Pupils do not witness poor behaviour, and bullying happens rarely. They say adults would 'sort it out' were it to occur. Pupils feel happy and safe in school.

Pupils appreciate the opportunity to do special jobs that staff give them. For example, those in the 'eco council' spoke proudly about litter picking and growing plants. They are determined to keep the school and local area clean to protect people and wildlife. The 'pupil ambassadors' feel confident leading some assemblies. They particularly enjoy revealing which class has had the best attendance. The termly attendance prize encourages pupils to come to school regularly to learn.

The curriculum in its current form, including how teachers teach it, is not working well for pupils. There are subjects where pupils do not build a rich store of knowledge. They cannot always complete activities well because some teachers' explanations are confusing.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

The school's curriculum, including in the early years, is in too much of an early stage of development. A lack of precision in some subjects leads to teachers being unclear about what they want pupils to learn. When teachers lack clarity, they prepare misguided lessons that do not help pupils to learn the intended knowledge. Leaders recognise teachers need more guidance, but their work to address this is incomplete.

Teachers' use of assessment lacks focus. In lessons, some teachers do not spot when pupils are struggling. Even in subjects where there are assessments to identify what pupils have learned, not all teachers make use of them. This means that teachers do not consistently know how to plan what pupils need to learn next.

Provision for reading works better. Teachers teach phonics more clearly. Many children in Reception form letters well and spell using their phonics knowledge. Across the school, teachers check what sounds and words pupils know, so most pupils receive a book they can read confidently. However, staff delivering catch-up support do not use strategies effectively when teaching phonics. As a result, some pupils do not read as fluently as they should.

Leaders who oversee provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are very experienced. They have strong ties with local agencies. This allows them to access training and resources to ensure pupils with SEND progress well from their starting points. Parents are positive about this work, recognising how much provision for pupils with SEND has improved recently.

Nearly all pupils behave politely and kindly at all times of the school day. Pupils are proud when they achieve 'star of the week' for exemplary conduct. When needed, leaders put in place effective additional support for the few pupils who struggle to behave.

Leaders have chosen resources well, including from the local area, to put together a programme that supports pupils' personal development. For example, pupils in Year 3 work with a resident artist. Also, leaders have secured an opportunity for the choir and tambourine band to perform alongside musicians at an event to celebrate the Commonwealth Games. The extra-curricular offer, too, helps pupils realise their talents and interests. Clubs include archery, cooking and gardening. Personal, social and health education is well considered. Pupils speak wisely and kindly about the ways people and families can be different.

Leaders evaluate the curriculum and school systems fairly. How governors challenge and support school leaders has improved greatly. Trustees also help to facilitate the work of school leaders by arranging opportunities for them to work collaboratively with other schools in the trust. Leaders ensure that staff workload is manageable. Leaders are approachable and listen to staff concerns and suggestions. All this ensures that the school environment is conducive to learning for staff and pupils.

In discussion with the headteacher, the inspector agreed that curriculum development, including the use of assessment, and how additional support helps the weakest readers to develop their fluency, may usefully serve as a focus for the next inspection.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Having received clear training, leaders and their staff identify and report pupils at risk of harm without delay. Records capture pertinent details. Acting quickly, leaders follow up concerns. This secures suitable help for vulnerable pupils. Governors check systems for safeguarding carefully. They know appropriate checks are carried out on staff working in the school. Assemblies and workshops on topics like cyberbullying and road safety teach pupils how to keep themselves safe. Pupils know they can share worries with staff, or use the 'worry box' to record their concerns for a teacher to read.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In too many subjects, the curriculum lacks clarity. Some teachers struggle to plan a clear sequence of learning. They then provide unclear instruction or misguided activities that do not support pupils to learn the knowledge they need to know. Leaders should ensure that the planned curriculum focuses precisely on concepts and vocabulary from Nursery to Year 6, and that these specifics are well known by teachers.
- The way that teachers assess does not always or consistently connect to what pupils have learned. As a result, teachers do not have the information they need to identify and to put right some pupils' misconceptions. Leaders should introduce assessment systems that are fit for purpose. Leaders should train teachers to use these well to inform their teaching.
- Catch-up support in reading does not include effective strategies to develop pupils' reading well. This means that pupils who need additional support with reading the most do not learn to read as quickly as they should. Leaders should train and monitor staff carefully to ensure those staff providing catch-up support help pupils to read with increasing fluency.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good or outstanding school, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the section 8 inspection as a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the second section 8 inspection since we judged Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School and Nursery to be good in June 2011.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	145678
Local authority	Southend-on-Sea
Inspection number	10238303
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	435
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Frank McEvoy
Headteacher	Janet Mullally
Website	www.shs-southend.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School is part of the Assisi Catholic Trust, having joined in May 2018. When its predecessor school, Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School and Nursery, was last inspected by Ofsted in March 2016, it was judged to be good overall.
- The school is part of the diocese of Brentwood.
- The religious character of the school was inspected under section 48 of the Education Act (2005) in June 2016.
- The school uses the services of one registered alternative education provider.
- The school runs its own before- and after-school care.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and has taken that into account in his evaluation of the school.
- The inspector held meetings with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, assistant headteacher, special educational needs and disabilities coordinator, two trustees, three governors, and representatives from the diocese and the local authority.

- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics and art. For each deep dive, the inspector discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The inspector also listened to a sample of pupils read to a familiar adult.
- To inspect safeguarding, the inspector met with the designated safeguarding lead and deputy designated safeguarding leads to review records. The inspector also met with the personal assistant to the headteacher to scrutinise the single central record of recruitment and vetting checks. The inspector spoke with trustees, governors, teachers and pupils to evaluate safeguarding.
- The inspector reviewed a range of other school documentation and policies, including the school development plan and minutes of meetings.
- The inspector spent time observing and speaking to pupils, as well as reviewing the 87 responses to the pupil questionnaire.
- The inspector gathered parents' views by reviewing the 20 responses and 11 free-text responses submitted to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View.
- The inspector gathered staff members' views by speaking to several of them and reviewing the 36 responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Daniel Short, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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