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## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 111691  
**Local Authority** Hartlepool  
**Inspection number** 310665  
**Inspection date** 25 September 2007  
**Reporting inspector** Gillian Salter-Smith

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3-11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	482
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 November 2003
<b>School address</b>	Hart Lane Hartlepool TS26 8NL
<b>Telephone number</b>	01429 272684
<b>Fax number</b>	01429 272693
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Elizabeth Hume
<b>Headteacher</b>	Miss Josephine Bowman

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

## Description of the school

The school is larger than average and is oversubscribed. It is a popular choice for families and it draws pupils from across the town. Pupils come from the full range of social and economic circumstances. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. An above average proportion of pupils has learning difficulties and/or disabilities but fewer pupils than is usual have a statement of special educational need. The vast majority of pupils are of White British origin. A very small number are from minority ethnic groups. There are no pupils who are looked after by persons other than their parents or families.

The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: the challenge for higher attaining pupils, the progress made by boys in writing, pupils' personal development, the care, guidance and support provided and middle leadership. Evidence was gathered by observing lessons, scrutinising pupils' work, assessment data and school documents and holding discussions with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders and pupils. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Key for inspection grades

**Grade 1** Outstanding

**Grade 2** Good

**Grade 3** Satisfactory

**Grade 4** Inadequate

## **Overall effectiveness of the school**

Grade: 2

Sacred Heart is a good school. It has some outstanding features. Pupils' personal development and the care, support and guidance pupils receive are excellent. Parents are highly supportive of the school's work. The numerous positive comments and praise from parents show an appreciation of the school's strong Christian values. Parents appreciate the unwavering commitment of staff to do everything that they can to ensure that their children are happy, safe and achieving well.

Standards are above average and achievement is good. The school consistently meets its challenging targets. Pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and the small number from minority ethnic groups, make good progress. Good achievement is brought about because teaching is good and pupils develop into confident learners. The school's results in national tests for Year 6 pupils have been consistently above average over the past five years. As a result of the school's focus on challenging higher attaining pupils, the 2007 results improved further with more pupils reaching above average standards, except for boys in English. Results of the school's national assessments for Year 2 pupils have been above average in three of the past five years. In 2006, results dipped to closer to average because fewer pupils than usual reached above national expectations. In 2007, the proportion of Year 2 pupils reaching the higher levels increased in mathematics and reading though less so for boys' writing. Standards of pupils' work in their books and in lessons are above average in Key Stages 1 and 2. In an English lesson, Year 6 pupils successfully rose to the challenging task of analysing sentence structures and explaining what influence they have on meaning and expression.

Pupils' enjoyment of school and learning is reflected in consistently high rates of attendance. Caring and supportive relationships between adults and pupils help pupils to feel safe and secure. Pupils are confident that

adults will help them if they are unhappy about anything. Pupils take on responsibilities with commitment and enthusiasm. They enjoy supporting younger pupils in their roles as 'playtime buddies'. They are very proud of the differences the school council has made. They know what they should do to keep healthy and they appreciate the many opportunities to take part in sporting activities. The school is not yet able to provide two hours of physical education for every child each week because of the restricted accommodation. Pupils have deep spiritual understanding, and very good social, moral and cultural understanding. They understand the key spiritual messages of school assemblies and reflect on what they mean to them. They are eager to support others less fortunate than themselves and they put a great deal of effort into charitable activities. The many opportunities to work cooperatively, take on responsibilities, and the good development of basic skills, prepare pupils well for their futures.

Pupils make good progress in lessons because teaching is consistently good. Lessons are well planned and structured, building on what has been learned. Visits and visitors to the school stimulate learning and are part of a good curriculum. They help pupils to write at greater length and with more enthusiasm within the context of different subjects. Pupils have especially enjoyed writing about the experience of Victorian children working in coal mines. A good variety of learning activities and very good use of electronic teaching aids help to maintain pupils' enthusiasm and interest. Increasingly, older pupils reinforce what they have learned by evaluating each other's work. Pupils of all ages enjoy working in pairs and talking about their work to each other. This is underpinned by excellent behaviour. Clear guidance on what pupils are aiming to achieve in each lesson and over a period of time is supporting pupils' good progress. Regular homework helps pupils to achieve well. Teachers assess pupils' progress rigorously and, in most lessons, use this information to ensure that learning tasks are challenging and well matched to pupils' individual needs. There are some instances where higher attaining pupils are not fully challenged and it is not always clear what more is expected of them in each lesson. Teaching assistants work effectively with lower attaining pupils and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Very supportive relationships underpin the outstanding care, support and guidance. Procedures for safeguarding pupils and ensuring their health, safety and protection are in place. Vulnerable pupils are very well supported in school and by extensive work with outside agencies. Staff are trained in mentoring and the 'chat room', a place to go at lunchtimes to talk to adults, is appreciated by pupils. Teachers give pupils clear guidance on how they can improve their work. Any underperformance is mostly recognised and responded to quickly.

Good leadership and management ensure a strong focus on raising standards. The headteacher is highly committed to the welfare and achievement of the pupils and sets high expectations in all areas of the school. Self-evaluation is accurate because senior leaders and, increasingly, middle leaders monitor performance rigorously, helping to establish the correct priorities for improvement. Systems used to analyse pupils' progress are not as helpful as they could be to leaders in identifying the performance of different groups of pupils across the school. Governors are very supportive and well informed. They are actively involved in monitoring the work of the school.

## **Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage**

Grade: 2

The overall level of development of children starting Nursery is below that typical for their age, especially in literacy and mathematical development. Children make good progress during their time in the Nursery and Reception classes because they are well taught and very well cared for. By the time they start Year 1, the majority of children have reached levels of development that are typical for their age, though only a small

number of pupils reach higher levels in literacy and mathematical development. Teachers get to know the children and their families well and relationships are very good between adults and children. As a result, children settle well into school life and enjoy learning and playing. A good range of play and other structured activities take account of children's different rates of progress. The recently introduced programme for teaching letter sounds is being well taught and is supporting learning of reading and writing. The school is starting to increase the use of the outdoor area to encourage learning in all areas.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Increase the proportion of boys that reach standards above the national expectation in writing.
- Ensure that pupils capable of learning very quickly are fully challenged in all lessons and that they understand what they need to do to attain high standards.

## **Annex A**

### **Inspection judgements**

**Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate** **School Overall**

#### **Overall effectiveness**

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

#### **Achievement and standards**

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

<sup>1</sup> Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

#### **Personal development and well-being**

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

<b>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</b>	<b>School Overall</b>
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1
<b>The quality of provision</b>	
How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1
<b>Leadership and management</b>	
How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

## **Annex B**

### **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

26 September 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Sacred Heart RC Primary School, Hartlepool, TS26 8NL

Many thanks to all of you for making me feel so welcome in your school. I enjoyed talking to quite a number of you in lessons, at lunchtime and in the discussions arranged by the school. It was good to see so many of you enjoying lessons and rising to the challenges that teachers set for you. It is important that you know what I found out about your school.

Sacred Heart RC Primary is a good school. It has very strong Christian values. The headteacher and all the staff work very hard to help you to do your best. They have been especially good at helping you to develop into thoughtful and caring young people who enjoy learning. As a result, you behave outstandingly well and are confident learners. You make good progress and achieve well in national tests and assessments. You are well taught and encouraged to think for yourselves. You take your responsibilities seriously and I am impressed by the number of changes your school council has brought about and the way you support younger pupils at playtimes.

The headteacher and staff know what is good about the school and what needs to be improved. They are aware that more of you, especially boys, need to improve your writing and reach the higher levels. I have asked them to make sure that you are clear about what you need to know, understand and be able to do to get there in every lesson. You can help by continuing to work hard and enjoy learning.

I do hope that you enjoy the rest of your time in school. Good wishes for the future!

Yours sincerely

Gillian Salter-Smith

Lead inspector

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