



DIOCESE OF **Arundel and Brighton**

DENOMINATIONAL CATHOLIC SCHOOL INSPECTION REPORT

School: Sacred Heart Catholic School

Address: Mayfield Lane, Durgates, Wadhurst, TN5 6DQ

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School Unique Reference Number: 114636

Headteacher:	Hilary Blake
Chair of Governors:	Anthony Moffatt
Lead Inspector:	Stephen C Horsman
Inspection date:	17 March 2020

Overall Effectiveness	Previous Inspection: 22 May 2008 2 This Inspection: 1
Catholic Life:	1
Religious Education:	1
Collective Worship:	1

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS FOR PARENTS AND PUPILS

Sacred Heart is an Outstanding Catholic school because:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ It explicitly espouses the richness of a Catholic way of living.▪ It is a multifaith community that is totally inclusive and in which the staff and pupils demonstrate mutual respect and care.▪ Governors are very knowledgeable and have a deep understanding of the strengths of the school and areas for development.▪ The leadership of the Headteacher is outstanding. She is deeply committed to developing spirituality within the lives of pupils, staff and families. She has a clear vision which is shared and understood by all members of the school community. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. They are extremely courteous in their dealings with each other, teachers and visitors and reflect the calm and peaceful ambience prevalent in the school.▪ Pupils demonstrate a very high level of religious literacy as a result of religious education which is well-led, and which permeates all aspects of the curriculum.▪ The quality of collective worship is outstanding. The pupils' response, participation and attentiveness during a longer than normal assembly for Mother's Day was excellent. There is a clear plan for collective worship which follows the liturgical year, is continually reviewed and is fully supported by the parish priest and governors. |
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FULL REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Sacred Heart School was established in 1938 by the Sisters of Notre Dame for local Catholic children, opening with 11 pupils. The school has expanded its physical footprint and pupil roll so that today there is a thriving nursery and one form entry for boys and girls from 2 – 11 years old. The school enjoys a rural setting, adjacent to the Sacred Heart Parish Church. Pupils come from a radius of around ten miles in East Sussex and into Kent. The school welcomes children of all faiths and none but expects all families to respect and support the distinctly Catholic ethos and traditions which are at the heart of everything the school aims to achieve. Pupils enjoy a broad curriculum taught by their class teachers with specialist teachers for Music and PE. At the end of Year 6 pupils move onto grammar schools in Kent, local independent secondary schools or state secondary schools in Kent and Sussex.

46% of staff are Catholic and one teacher holds the CCRS. 30% of pupils are Catholic, 46% are from other Christian faiths, 21% are from no faith background and the remainder are from other faith backgrounds. 25 pupils are on the special educational needs and disabilities (SEN-D) register and two pupils have education healthcare plans. (EHCP).

WHAT DOES THE SCHOOL NEED TO DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

- Incorporate visits to places of worship of other world faiths to enhance the learning experience of the pupils.
- Further develop pupil leadership of liturgical experiences across the whole school.

CATHOLIC LIFE

THE QUALITY OF THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL

- The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school.
- The quality of provision of the Catholic Life of the school.
- How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school.

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The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school is Outstanding.

There is a real sense of belonging to a 'family' at Sacred Heart School. Pupils, irrespective of background, support and care for each other. They fully participate in activities which enables them to contribute to developing the Catholic character of the school. Pupils told the inspector enthusiastically about their contribution to the common good through the shoebox appeal and Cafod.

Pupils' behaviour, conduct and attitudes and their ability to lead in the Catholic life of the community was clearly demonstrated during a Mother's Day assembly involving the whole school observed by the inspector. Each pupil took part in leading prayers and singing beautifully for their mothers; on this occasion circumstances precluded them from attending. The attentiveness, respect and reverence from all pupils was excellent. The school ensured that parents could take part virtually through the school website.

Pupil engagement in the Catholic life of the school is a strength. They know what makes it a Catholic school, for example, through the prayer garden and acting as altar servers, readers and musicians in the adjacent Sacred Heart Parish Church. Pupil leaders serve as excellent role models with their behaviour and concern for others. They told the inspector about how they raise money for charities such as Cafod and are alert to the needs of their peers as shown by their daily diaries called 'Forty Acts.' These are acts of kindness which they do each day for each other and others in the community. Pupils' understanding of their vocation is demonstrated by the spirit of friendship and mutual respect between all members of the community.

Parent questionnaires show the vast majority of parents feel the Catholic ethos of Sacred Heart school has had a positive influence on their children. Parents not of the Catholic faith expressed their 'love of the Catholic ethos at the school, and felt confident in how this informs all aspects of the school'. They stated that it was a key reason why they chose the school.

When interviewed, parents said that the school offers a distinctively Catholic education citing the display work, prayer tables and the key words of the school's mission statement: Love, Learn, Grow, Worship which imbue all aspects of the school's life. In addition, parents spoke about the impact upon their child at home citing examples such as greater attention during Mass and leading extempore prayers at home.

The quality of provision of the Catholic Life of the school is Outstanding

The impact of the school's mission statement is evident in all areas of the school's life. It appears in almost all school policies in some form. Parents told the inspector about the awards given to the pupils relating to each of the key words in the mission statement. Staff questionnaire responses overwhelmingly show that they are fully committed to its implementation and stated that 'this is a very caring school, Catholic life and values permeate all levels and activities.'

In addition, staff questionnaires show there is a strong commitment from staff to the life of prayer and this was further evidenced in lessons observed.

The school is distinctly Catholic. Pupils understand the range of religious images and displays that reflect the deeply spiritual nature of the school. Pupils value the parish church which is on the same site as the school and the relationship between the school and the parish works well. The parish priest told the inspector that pupils were well-prepared when they entered the church and were 'very wonderful' in their participation. He also told the inspector that younger parishioners valued the link with the primary school.

It is evident in the daily routine in the life of the school, that staff are driven by a shared desire to provide the best possible care and education for pupils. Every pupil is involved in the best way they can be. Pupils described teachers as role models of friendship. They model Christian behaviour that reflects the shared mission of the school. They successfully create a warm, supportive and prayerful school.

Pastoral care is a significant strength. Clear policies explicitly provide the highest levels of pastoral care to staff and pupils. The impact of policies is evident in pupils' exemplary behaviour and strong relationships throughout the community. There is a tangible sense that the faith is the bedrock of everything the school strives to achieve. Testimony from pupils, parents and staff shows that people genuinely care for each other. Pupils articulated that they feel safe and described the school as 'amazing.' Parents gave the example of the buddy system to support the excellent pastoral care given to pupils.

There is a Relationship and Sex Education policy in place which reflects the Catholic character of the school. Teaching uses the Journey in Love programme and is taught in the context of Church teaching. Parents said that pupils gain a 'strong set of values and a good moral compass' which prepares them well for life in modern Britain. Pupils become confident individuals with an awareness of other faiths and cultures and acceptance of people of those cultures.

The curriculum, both in its academic and wider sense, reflects the school mission to serve the common good and respect our common home. The Catholic life permeates every aspect of the curriculum. The dignity of each person is at the heart of everything the school does. It provides extensive opportunities for the moral and spiritual development of all pupils and staff.

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school is Outstanding.

Leaders and governors are absolutely committed to the Catholic life and character of the school. Governors told the inspector that the structure of the governing body includes an ethos and curriculum committee which receives and evaluates detailed reports from link governors and governors who attend acts of worship. Governors were involved in writing the School Evaluation Form for the Catholic School Inspection and challenge and support the leadership team appropriately.

Governors and leaders review policies using the expertise within the governing body to ensure policies are accurate and reflect the distinctive Catholic character of the school. Governors gave the inspector, as an example, the recent review of the Health and Safety policy.

Governors and leaders help shape and support the vision and direction of the Catholic life through strong links with the Diocese and by 'looking at the end product.' Governors told inspectors that Sacred Heart is a school where 'every child is known and where everyone thinks of others.' They also said that pupils who leave Sacred Heart are 'well rounded, lovely children,' This was reinforced by comments from parents and the local parish priest.

The recently appointed religious education curriculum leader quickly identified areas for development and immediately addressed them such that the school has clear assessment tracking and ensures that at least 10% of curriculum time is devoted to classroom religious education. There is continued review of religious education and she effectively ensures governors have a good understanding of strengths and areas for development as evidenced by what governors said during the inspection. The recently reviewed religious education policy gives very clear aims, strategies for implementation and methods of assessment.

The school is effective in engaging parents in the education of their children. Parents are fully informed about their child's activities in the school. Parents told the inspector about a number of ways in which they are informed including for example a religious education curriculum map given to parents at the beginning of each year. Parents are actively involved in the school describing the school as a 'second home'. The online weekly newsletter keeps parents very well informed. It includes for example updates on what is happening for the week ahead and mission in action awards which recognise and celebrate pupils' achievements linked to the school mission statement. Testimony from one parent encapsulates the views of the vast majority of parents, that they are an integral part of school life.

Induction into the Catholic ethos for new staff and inset on Catholic life are instrumental in developing a deep awareness of what it means to work at Sacred Heart School. The efficacy of prayer and the foundation of Gospel values show that teachers strive for the best for each other and for pupils and their families.

The Headteacher is inspirational in strengthening spiritual development across the school. Her dedication to others is evident in the prayerful and harmonious school community. She embodies the mission of the school to Love, Learn, Grow, and Worship. Staff questionnaires stated, 'this is a happy loving place to work. Everyone is valued. I have felt hugely supported by our very loving Headteacher. It is a special, Christian place in which to work.' The Headteacher is supported by all staff who demonstrate their own commitment to offering unstinting support to pupils and their families.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

THE QUALITY OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

- How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education.
- The quality of teaching and assessment in Religious Education.
- How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education.

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How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education is Outstanding.

The quality of pupils' achievement, learning and progress is excellent. Pupils displayed very high levels of religious literacy in all the lessons observed; from pupils in the reception class linking the term 'crucified' to the Sign of the Cross, to pupils in Year 6 exploring in great depth the Resurrection of Lazarus from the Gospel of John.

Parents are kept very well informed of their children's progress in religious education through parents' evenings, reports and, as parents told the inspector, through their children 'talking enthusiastically about what they have been learning in RE.'

Religious education is held in high regard by pupils. They told the inspector that their learning is fun and different. They gave examples of fun activities that helped them understand Bible references or that helped them express their thoughts. Lesson observations and discussions show that pupils genuinely enjoy their lessons. They respond positively to the curriculum and enjoy their learning. This is evidenced by outstanding behaviour for learning and high levels of engagement in observations during the inspection. Work scrutiny showed that almost all pupils' written work is of a very high standard. Pupils are proud of their achievements.

The quality of teaching and assessment in Religious Education is Outstanding

All lessons observed during the inspection showed teaching which was never less than good and often outstanding. Prayer was central to each lesson and reflected the topic of the lesson so that pupils were able to see how prayer is central to their lives. Pupils told the inspector that learning about Mother Teresa had helped them understand 'about giving all' and they linked this to Jesus giving his life for all.

Pupils' behaviour in lessons is exemplary reflecting their obvious enjoyment of their learning. Lessons showed purposeful learning with a variety of resources such as video, pupils' display work, role play, art and puzzles being used to engage the pupils. All pupils were given opportunities to access the curriculum and teaching assistants were used to support pupils with SEN-D to very good effect.

Teachers showed a high level of mastery of the subject. Lessons observed and conversations with pupils shows that teachers' expertise inspires the pupils, builds their understanding and encourages independent learning.

Regular and effective dialogue between governors and the school ensures governors are fully informed of standards of teaching and learning. Governors carry out regular visits to the school which include learning walks, accompanied by the Headteacher, who is the co-ordinator for Catholic Life and Worship, and discussions with the curriculum leader for religious education.

All pupils make at least good progress from their starting points. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEN-D) are well supported in order to achieve and progress. Data clearly illustrates that the overwhelming majority of pupils are achieving age related expectations or better. A very small minority are not achieving age-related expectations and the subject leader was able to clearly identify the context and what support is in place to enable these pupils to progress. For example, pupils frequently join the school part way through a key stage and have no or little experience of RE and Christian ethos. In these cases, the quality of the curriculum and strategies including the use of vocabulary-rich lesson headers and displays promote and assist the acquisition of age-appropriate religious vocabulary.

Pupils articulated that they know how to improve their work. Work scrutiny shows feedback ensures that pupils know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. Pupils respond to advice in their books and teachers then respond to the pupils thus creating an ongoing dialogue which enhances the learning of the pupils.

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education is Outstanding.

Leaders and governors ensure that the religious education curriculum meets the requirements of the Bishops' Conference in every respect and in each key stage. The required amount of 10% curriculum time is given to religious education and the subject leader for religious education is proactive in ensuring that this is a clear expectation among staff. The school follows the 'Come and See' programme in line with the expectation of the diocese.

Leaders and governors monitor religious education through school visits and learning walks. They are clear about data and interrogate it appropriately. The Headteacher monitors teaching and learning and feeds back to governors ensuring they can make informed decisions about religious education at Sacred Heart.

The Headteacher demonstrates strong and inspirational leadership of teaching and learning in religious education. She regularly monitors teaching and learning through learning walks and lesson observations. The resulting feedback to teachers and regular formal and informal meetings ensures professional dialogue. Staff are well supported and 'really enjoy working here'.

The highly effective subject leader for religious education has introduced a tracking system which gives clear information regarding the progress of the pupils. This tracking system allows for monitoring of individual pupils and analysis and evaluation of the impact of religious education. This coupled with the embedding of the 'Come and See' programme, is effective in supporting improvements in planning and supporting the learning and achievements of pupils.

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP / PRAYER AND PRAYER LIFE

THE QUALITY OF COLLECTIVE WORSHIP AND PRAYER LIFE

- How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship and Prayer Life
- The quality of provision for Collective Worship and Prayer Life
- How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship and Prayer Life

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How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship and Prayer Life is outstanding.

The inspection took place on a day when the school holds its annual Mother's Day assembly; an occasion where each child takes part, individually and collectively to sing and pray for their mothers. Traditionally mothers are invited to be present but, on this occasion circumstances precluded them from attending. Despite this, and the forty minutes duration of the assembly, the pupils' response and participation from the youngest Early Years' pupil to the Year 6 pupils was one of reverence and respect. Pupils were involved through various roles such as reading prayers, singing and some were involved in the organisation of the event.

Pupils recognise that prayer is part of the daily rhythm of school life. It pervades all that they do. Lesson observations show a deep spirituality is encouraged. Prayers and reflections linked to the topic are shared and links with the liturgical norms of the Church are evident. For example, pupils studying a text from the Gospels stood up, introduced the text using the liturgical norm of the three-fold sign of the Cross with the words, and concluded the reading with the liturgical norm. Pupils, parents and teachers acknowledge that living in a praying community has a profound effect on the spiritual development of all, irrespective of ability or faith background. Pupils told the inspector that 'in class liturgies three times a week they make up their own prayers.' In addition, parent questionnaire responses stated that their children had 'shown greater interest in prayer and reflection and are much more attentive in services.'

Pupils displayed a good knowledge of the Church's liturgical year. They know the major feasts and seasons and can explain the significance of colour appropriate to each one. For example, in the assembly pupils explained the meaning of Laetare Sunday and its link to Mother's Day. Pupils expressed a deep sense of respect for those of different faiths and this is reflected in the ease with which they spoke of the opportunities to pray in their own way. Pupils articulated that 'prayer at school helps them spiritually' and referred to the 'Mary Garden' as a particular place where they can go for quiet prayer.

Collective worship makes a significant contribution to the moral and spiritual development of the pupils. Pupils said that it inspires them to give, citing the example of raising money for Cafod in support of this. Parents confirmed this adding that pupils had supported the Nourish Food Bank. They also spoke of the impact of the prayer life on their children's response to collective worship in their own churches stating that 'from displaying lively behaviour, during their time at Sacred Heart they had become much more attentive at Mass'.

The quality of provision for Collective Worship and Prayer Life is Outstanding.

Collective worship is central to the life of the school and praying together is part of the daily experience for all in the community. This grows out of the 'Come and See' programme which includes spiritual inspirations for use by pupils. In addition, each classroom has a prayer focus maintained by the pupils which reflects the liturgical season, and the topic being studied.

The pupils have a programme of collective worship which is varied and engaging. It includes opportunities for formal and extempore prayer, and sacramental celebrations. Parents spoke about their involvement in the sacraments, that they are invited to all acts of collective worship such as assemblies and that the school reaches out to the local community. Parent questionnaires are overwhelmingly positive and include statements that parents are 'particularly happy to hear their child mention aspects of their faith in practice such as Mass, Jesus' teachings, and awareness of the sacraments.'

The parish priest described the collective acts of worship as 'edifying', he described the preparation for liturgies such as Mass as very good and when the pupils 'come to Church they are wonderful.' Sacramental preparations work very well citing an example where the Headteacher used rope symbolism to explain the Sacrament of Reconciliation which helped greatly when celebrating First Confessions.

Acts of worship reflect the Catholic character of the school in their depth and variety and collective worship has a clear purpose, message and direction which enables pupils to grow in their understanding of the value of prayer in their lives.

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship and Prayer Life is Outstanding.

Leaders and governors have expert knowledge in planning and delivering quality experiences of collective worship. Quality time is dedicated to this part of regular reviews of school performance. The Headteacher has effectively established prayer and worship as part of the rhythm of daily school and home life. Prayer and worship are inclusive of all pupils.

The commitment of staff to understanding and leading prayer is evident in the way pupils are inspired to engage in collective worship and through their own questionnaire responses. Governors, one of whom is the parish priest, understand the role they play in ensuring high quality provision for collective worship. They monitor and evaluate the provision for collective worship through their regular visits to the school.

Leaders provide professional development opportunities through links with the Diocese and giving advice and assistance for staff on planning and delivering collective worship. Resources are provided to support teachers and empower them to lead and inspire pupils in prayer.

Leaders and governors are effective in supporting the development of thought-provoking, age-appropriate and accessible collective worship for all pupils, irrespective of ability, faith or culture. This was clearly evident in the assembly and class prayer observed. Pupils told the inspector that Year 6 create the prayer focus for whole school acts of collective worship and pupils are monitors of the prayer focus in classrooms. Leaders and governors are committed to further developing the leadership potential of all pupils to lead acts of worship for the community.

Summary of Inspection Judgements

How effective the school is in providing Catholic Education.

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Catholic Life

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The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school.

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The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school

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How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school.

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Religious Education

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How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education.

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The quality of teaching and assessment in Religious Education

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How well leaders and governors monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education

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Collective Worship and Prayer Life

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How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship and Prayer Life.

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The quality of provision for Collective Worship and Prayer Life.

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How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship and Prayer Life.

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