Inspection of a good school: Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School, Barrow

Lumley Street, Barrow-in-Furness, Cumbria LA14 2BA

Inspection dates: 24 and 25 April 2024

Outcome

Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School, Barrow continues to be a good school.

The headteacher of this school is Simone Beach. This school is part of Mater Christi Multi-Academy Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Jacky Kennedy, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by John Murray.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy at this school. They told inspectors that they appreciate seeing their classmates each day and that they enjoy their learning. Pupils know that there are staff who they can talk to, should they have any worries or concerns.

The school has high expectations for pupils' achievement and for their wider development. Most pupils rise to these aspirations. Some spoke of future careers that they may wish to pursue, such as in book illustration, film directing and engineering. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and those who are disadvantaged, typically learn well.

Pupils generally behave well. They understand the school's mission, which is about treating people fairly. Pupils said that they respect the many differences between people, including disabilities, languages and religion. They know about the importance of equality.

The school aims to provide pupils with experiences that they might not otherwise have. For example, links with local organisations help pupils to develop their appreciation of social enterprise. They look forward to trips and visits, for instance to singing concerts, museums and zoos. Pupils enjoy participating in after-school activities. These include gymnastics, sports, choir and drama clubs. Pupils have opportunities to learn to play musical instruments following expert tuition.

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

During ongoing circumstances regarding the viability of the school's premises, the trust and the school have worked together to make sure that disruption to pupils' learning is

minimised. They have provided continuity in pupils' education by sourcing additional premises. This has enabled pupils to continue to achieve well across a range of subjects.

The curriculum is suitably broad and ambitious. Most subjects have been designed carefully and the knowledge that pupils should learn follows a logical order. However, in some subjects, the school has not determined or ordered the specific knowledge and skills that pupils should learn. As a result, some pupils have developed gaps in their knowledge.

Typically, staff have strong subject knowledge of the subjects that they teach. They provide clear explanations while delivering new learning. Staff choose appropriate activities that help pupils to learn new curriculum content. This is mostly evident in subjects where the curriculums are more well thought out.

The school identifies the additional needs of pupils with SEND quickly, starting from the early years. The school works well with external professionals, and with parents and carers, to enable pupils with SEND to be ready to learn alongside their peers.

Central to the curriculum are carefully chosen and high-quality texts. Staff encourage pupils to read widely and often. For example, older pupils spoke fondly of their regular 'book group' sessions, in which they explore and discuss their reading books each week. Reading competitions and author visits help to foster pupils' love of reading further.

In the provision for two- and three-year-old children, staff focus on developing children's communication and language skills through stories, songs and rhymes. This helps to prepare children for phonics, which starts at the beginning of the Reception class. Most pupils develop into fluent and accurate readers. However, some of the strategies that some staff use to support early readers are not fully effective. As a result, a minority of pupils do not learn to read with fluency and accuracy as quickly as they should.

Pupils realise that attending school is important. The school monitors pupils' levels of attendance and reasons for absences are known. It has started to work with the trust to implement a more robust attendance strategy. Nonetheless, too many pupils remain persistently absent. These pupils miss out on important learning and wider opportunities.

Pupils have mainly positive attitudes towards their learning. Classrooms are mostly calm and purposeful environments. Clear routines are taught from the start of the early years. Two-year-old children settle well and quickly develop a strong sense of belonging.

Pupils benefit from a range of wider development opportunities. They learn how to be safe outside of school and how to look after their health. Pupils learn about the importance of being responsible citizens. For example, they support foodbanks, fundraise for charities and take on different roles, such as being members of the pupil 'charity committee' and 'mini police'. Pupils know that these roles help them to improve the local community.

Staff are dedicated to supporting the school and its pupils. In turn, they appreciate the school's consideration of their workload and well-being. For example, staff value training

opportunities and additional time to fulfil their roles. Parents recognise the efforts of staff, and many said that the school is like a family to them and their children.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, the school has not determined the important knowledge that pupils should learn and by when. This results in gaps in some pupils' knowledge and understanding over time. The school should identify the precise knowledge that pupils should acquire in these subjects and the order that this should be learned.
- At times, the support for a minority of pupils who struggle with their reading is not as effective as it should be. This hampers these pupils in learning all that they should to become fluent and accurate readers. The school should ensure that staff use effective early reading strategies consistently well.
- Too many pupils do not attend school regularly enough. This means that they miss out on important learning and the wider experiences that other pupils benefit from. The school should work with the trust to fully implement its attendance strategy, so that levels of persistent absence reduce further.

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 an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the predecessor school, Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School, to be good in June 2016.

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.

Further information

You can search for published performance information about the school.

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the definition of children in need of help and protection; pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's pupil premium funding (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	148699
Local authority	Westmorland and Furness
Inspection number	10321476
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	234
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	John Murray
CEO	Jacky Kennedy
Headteacher	Simone Beach
Website	www.sacredheart.cumbria.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school is part of Mater Christi Multi-Academy Trust
- Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School, Barrow converted to become an academy school in September 2021. When its predecessor school, Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good overall.
- Since the previous inspection, a new headteacher has been appointed.
- The school does not make use of alternative provision for pupils.
- The school provides a before- and after-school club for pupils.
- This Roman Catholic school is in the Diocese of Lancaster. The school's last section 48 inspection, for schools of a religious character, was in November 2021. The next section 48 inspection is due to take place before the end of 2026.
- The school provides educational provision for two-year-old children.
- At the time of this inspection, the school was operating from two separate sites. The Nursery classes were located at the school's main site. Classes from the Reception Year to Year 6 were located at St Bernard's High School, Rating Lane, Barrow-in-Furness, Cumbria LA13 9LE. Inspectors visited both sites during the inspection.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection that the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken this into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and music. In each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders and visited a sample of lessons. They spoke with teachers and with some pupils about their learning. Inspectors looked at samples of pupils' work. They also considered the curriculum in some other subjects.
- The lead inspector observed some pupils from Years 1 to 3 read to a familiar adult. Inspectors discussed reading with several groups of older pupils.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher and other school leaders. The lead inspector met with representatives of the academy trust, including the CEO, and members of the local governing board. He also spoke with the chair of the trust and with representatives of the local authority and of diocese.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and around school, including at breakfast club and during lunchtime. They spoke with several groups of pupils about their experiences at school and considered the responses to Ofsted's pupil survey.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors reviewed the single central record and took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils. They considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation documents, improvement plans, minutes of local governing body meetings and documents pertaining to pupils' behaviour and levels of attendance.
- Inspectors spoke with staff about their workload and their well-being. They considered the responses to Ofsted's online survey for staff.
- Inspectors took account of the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. The lead inspector met with some parents at the start of the school day.

Inspection team

David Lobodzinski, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Stephanie Swift	Ofsted Inspector

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