



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

Focused Compliance and Educational Quality Inspection Reports

Sacred Heart School

March 2022

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School's Details

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|----------------------------------|--|----|----------------|-----|
| School | Sacred Heart School | | | |
| DfE number | 845/6020 | | | |
| Registered charity number | 252878 | | | |
| Address | Sacred Heart School Mayfield Lane Wadhurst East Sussex TN5 6DQ | | | |
| Telephone number | 01892 783414 | | | |
| Email address | admin@sacredheartwadhurst.org.uk | | | |
| Headteacher | Mrs Johanna Collyer | | | |
| Chair of governors | Mr Geoff Hughes | | | |
| Age range | 2 to 11 | | | |
| Number of pupils on roll | 142 | | | |
| | EYFS | 39 | Juniors | 103 |
| Inspection dates | 1 to 4 March 2022 | | | |

1. Background Information

About the school

- 1.1 Sacred Heart School is an independent Catholic day school. It was established in 1938 by the Sisters of the Order of Notre Dame to provide an education to the children of local Catholic families. Pupils including children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) are accommodated in a range of buildings in close proximity to each other. The school is governed by the Arundel and Brighton Diocesan Trust. The school has close relationships with the Sacred Heart parish church. Since the previous inspection the school has opened a new foundation stage building and added a multi-use games area, dedicated classroom for the teaching of ICT and onsite kitchen. The current head was appointed in September 2021.
- 1.2 The inspection took into account the circumstances faced by schools during the COVID-19 pandemic and the restrictions imposed by government guidance at various points of the pandemic.

What the school seeks to do

- 1.3 Sacred Heart School aspires to provide a happy, safe and secure environment in which every child is encouraged to achieve their full potential, within an inclusive community which is centred on Christ's teachings and shared Gospel values, and through a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum that promotes the spiritual, moral, emotional and physical development of each child. The school recognises the unique gifts of each child and aims to instil a strong sense of self-worth by celebrating personal achievements and strengths.

About the pupils

- 1.4 Nationally standardised test data provided by the school indicate that the ability of the pupils is above average. The number of pupils requiring support for special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is 23. They require support with a range of learning needs including dyslexia and dyspraxia. Two pupils have an education, health and care (EHC) plan. No pupils have English as an additional language (EAL).

2. Regulatory Compliance Inspection

Preface

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is approved by the Secretary of State to inspect schools which are, or whose heads are, in membership of the associations which form the Independent Schools Council (ISC) and report on the extent to which they meet the Independent School Standards ('the standards') in the Schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014. Inspections of schools with early years settings not requiring registration also report whether the school complies with key provisions of the Early Years Foundation Stage statutory framework. Additionally, inspections report on the school's accessibility plan under Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 and the ban on corporal punishment under section 548 of the Education Act 1996. Inspections also comment on the progress made to meet any compliance action points set out in the school's most recent statutory inspection.

ISI inspections are also carried out under the arrangements of the ISC Associations for the maintenance and improvement of the quality of their membership.

This is a FOCUSED COMPLIANCE INSPECTION which was combined with an inspection of EDUCATIONAL QUALITY. The FOCUSED COMPLIANCE inspection reports only on the school's compliance with the standards. The standards represent minimum requirements and judgements are given either as **met** or as **not met**. All schools are required to meet all the standards applicable to them. Where the minimum requirements are not met, this is clearly indicated in the relevant section of the report and the school is required to take the actions specified. In this focused compliance inspection, key standards have been inspected in detail. These are the standards on safeguarding; measures to guard against bullying; arrangements for pupils' health and safety; arrangements to check the suitability of staff; the provision of information; the handling of parents' complaints; and other related aspects of leadership and management. The remaining standards and requirements are deemed to continue to be met unless evidence to the contrary has been found.

Inspections do not include matters that are outside of the regulatory framework described above, such as: an exhaustive health and safety audit; compliance with data protection requirements; an in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features; contractual arrangements with parents; an investigation of the financial viability of the school or its accounting procedures.

Inspectors may be aware of individual safeguarding concerns, allegations and complaints as part of the inspection process. Such matters will not usually be referred to specifically in published reports in this document but will have been considered by the team in reaching its judgements.

Links to the standards and requirements can be found here: [The Education \(Independent School Standards\) Regulations 2014](#), [Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework](#).

Key findings

- 2.1 The school meets the standards in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 and relevant requirements of the statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage, and associated requirements and no further action is required as a result of this inspection.**

PART 1 – Quality of education provided

- 2.2 The school's own framework for assessment confirms that teaching enables pupils to make good progress in the context of Part 1 paragraph 3(a).
- 2.3 The curriculum is documented, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work for the pupils and covers the required breadth of material. The teaching enables pupils to make good progress, encompasses effective behaviour management and is supported by suitable resources. A suitable framework for the assessment of pupils' performance is in place.
- 2.4 Pupils receive relationships education in the junior school. The school has consulted parents and published a written statement of its policy which has regard to the relevant statutory guidance.
- 2.5 The standards relating to the quality of education [paragraphs 1–4] are met.**

PART 2 – Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

- 2.6 Principles and values are actively promoted which facilitate the personal development of pupils as responsible, tolerant, law-abiding citizens.
- 2.7 The standard relating to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development [paragraph 5] is met.**

PART 3 – Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- 2.8 Arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils by means that pay due regard to current statutory guidance; good behaviour is promoted; bullying is prevented so far as reasonably practicable; health and safety requirements are met, including those relating to fire safety; provision is made for first aid. Pupils are properly supervised; admission and attendance registers are maintained, as required, and there is a strategic approach to risk assessment. A disability access plan is in place.
- 2.9 The standards relating to welfare, health and safety [paragraphs 6–16], the requirement of Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010, and the ban on corporal punishment under section 548 of the Education Act 1996 are met.**

PART 4 – Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors

- 2.10 The school makes appropriate checks to ensure the suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors, and a register is kept as required.
- 2.11 The standards relating to the suitability of those in contact with pupils at the school [paragraphs 17–21] are met.**

PART 5 – Premises of and accommodation at schools

- 2.12 Suitable toilet and changing facilities, and showering facilities where required by the standard, and appropriate accommodation for pupils' medical needs are provided. The premises are maintained to

a standard commensurate with health and safety; acoustics and lighting are appropriate; water provision is adequate. Suitable outdoor space is provided for physical education and outdoor play.

2.13 The standards relating to the premises and accommodation [paragraphs 22–31] are met.

PART 6 – Provision of information

2.14 A range of information is published, provided or made available to parents, inspectors and the Department for Education. This includes details about the proprietor, the ethos of the school and the curriculum, and of the school's arrangements for admission, behaviour and exclusions, bullying, health and safety, first aid, details of the complaints procedure, and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year, and the provision for any with education, health and care plans or English as an additional language. It also includes particulars of the school's academic performance during the preceding school year, inspection reports and (for parents only) a report at least annually of their own child's progress. The safeguarding policy is posted on the school's website.

2.15 The standard relating to the provision of information [paragraph 32] is met.

PART 7 – Manner in which complaints are handled

2.16 Parental complaints, if any, are handled effectively through a three-stage process, (informal, formal and a hearing before a panel of three, one of whom is independent of the school). Each stage has clear time scales, and at the third stage the panel can make findings and recommendations which are communicated to the complainant. Records are kept appropriately, including of any action taken, whether or not a complaint is successful.

2.17 The standard relating to the handling of complaints [paragraph 33] is met.

PART 8 – Quality of leadership in and management of schools

2.18 The proprietor ensures that the leadership and management demonstrate good skills and knowledge, and fulfil their responsibilities effectively, so that the other standards are consistently met, and they actively promote the well-being of the pupils.

2.19 The standard relating to leadership and management of the school [paragraph 34] is met.

3. Educational Quality Inspection

Preface

The **EDUCATIONAL QUALITY** inspection reports on the quality of the school's work. It focuses on the two key outcomes:

- The achievement of the pupils, including their academic development, and
- The personal development of the pupils.

The headline judgements apply one of the ISI descriptors 'excellent', 'good', 'sound' or 'unsatisfactory'.

Where necessary, National Curriculum nomenclature is used to refer to year groups in the school.

Key findings

3.1 The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent.

- Pupils develop excellent spoken and written communication skills.
- Pupils demonstrate high levels of academic achievement and success in a wide variety of activities beyond the formal curriculum.
- Pupils apply themselves exceptionally well in lessons and demonstrate an excellent attitude to learning.
- Pupils develop excellent study skills so that they are well-prepared for the next stage of their education.

3.2 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.

- Pupils' spiritual development is excellent and shows a deep understanding of the values and virtues that help them to appreciate the non-material aspects of life.
- Pupils have a very clear sense of right and wrong and are consistently keen to maintain high personal standards of behaviour throughout the school.
- Pupils' understanding of the importance of a healthy diet and physical exercise is excellent.
- Pupils have an excellent, and hugely positive, understanding and appreciation of people of faiths and cultures other than their own.

Recommendation

3.3 In the context of the excellent outcomes, the school might wish to consider making the following improvement:

- Ensure all pupils make consistently strong progress in numeracy across the full age range through the provision of appropriate stretch and challenge throughout the school.

The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements

3.4 The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent.

3.5 Pupils from the EYFS onwards make excellent progress in all subjects as is evident from the quality and volume of written work. Their levels of attainment rise significantly as they move through the school, as observed in lesson observations, books scrutiny and the results of nationally standardised and internal assessments. As a result, pupils gain places at selective senior independent and grammar

schools, with many successfully gaining scholarships. Pupils who need additional support achieve well in lessons, benefiting from the input of support assistants and activities adapted to their individual needs. Pupils identified as having special education needs or disabilities (SEND) achieve very well in relation to their individual abilities. This is due to the effective use of assessment data by subject leaders in identifying pupils who appear to not be achieving their potential. The most able pupils attain at high levels in relation to their age, particularly in literacy and numeracy because they are appropriately challenged, enabling them to gain a deeper understanding of the concepts taught. Pupils are confident in their achievements, citing continuous feedback, both written and verbal, as a significant factor in creating a constructive dialogue between themselves and teachers that support their learning.

- 3.6 The development of pupil's knowledge skills and understanding across different areas of learning is excellent. Pupils say they enjoy the wide variety of subjects beyond core subjects, such as music, art and humanities, French, ICT and Latin and they are motivated to succeed by the school's recognition of their talents, in line with the school's ethos that all children have a gift which should be celebrated. Pupils are willing to share their ideas, answers and opinions openly, knowing that their contribution will be welcomed by teachers and peers alike. They express their skills, knowledge and understanding in many creative ways, highlighted by the excellent standard of displays across the school. Pupils' artwork is of a high standard.
- 3.7 Pupils show excellent spoken communication skills. These are evident in the way they express themselves in lessons, where they are regularly encouraged to communicate verbally, whether reading aloud, talking to their partners or presenting to the class. During the inspection, a vocal workshop allowed pupils throughout the school to develop their highly accomplished communication skills. Reading is valued throughout the school and pupils spoke about enjoying reading challenges and sharing books with younger pupils. Pupils demonstrate an excellent knowledge of writing for different purposes, whether persuasively, descriptively, fiction or fact, as was seen in Year 4 where pupils wrote imaginatively in response to a poem. Pupils regularly perform, and achieve great success at local and regional festivals. During the inspections pupils recited poems from memory in preparation for an upcoming festival, making excellent use of characterisation, intonation, pace and volume to express both meaning and humour.
- 3.8 Pupils' competence and development in numeracy is of a high standard in response to teaching which provides stretch and challenge for more able pupils and excellent support for those who need it. Pupils develop good numeracy skills from an early age, responding with enthusiasm to well-paced teaching which takes individual needs into consideration. In a small number of lessons, pupils were less engaged in response to a slower pace and lower level of challenge, and as a result completed a smaller volume of work and made less progress. Pupils are highly adept at drawing on their mathematical skills to solve problems in other subjects, including in history where Year 5 pupils arranged dates in chronological order and calculate the time between events. In Year 3, pupils successfully applied their mathematical knowledge and skills in a science lesson to measure and record the force needed to move a toy car on different surfaces.
- 3.9 Pupils show a high level of competence in using information and communication technology (ICT). From the earliest years, children develop familiarity and confidence through the use of touchscreen devices and programmable toys as part of their self-directed play. Pupils use ICT very effectively to express their creativity. In Year 2 pupils work independently to research and create collaborative artwork using a digital painting application. Older pupils spoke confidently to inspectors about coding, using a range of programmes and digital applications, and how to build a website. Pupils understand the difference between ICT as a subject and its use as a support to learning and show proficiency in applying their skills more widely to other areas of the curriculum, including creating presentations for research projects, designing greeting cards, accessing digital maps or handling data as part of a study into rates of growth. In Year 6, pupils have used their skills to design posters for mental health week, and learnt about picture editing for a project on UFOs. Senior leaders have been instrumental in

extending the availability of ICT throughout the school as part of an ongoing programme to ensure digital devices are available in all classrooms.

- 3.10 The development of pupils' study skills is excellent. They draw upon a wide range of resources and utilise excellent research skills in lessons on a regular basis. They readily access dictionaries, thesauruses, atlases and other reference books to support and improve their learning. In a Year 4 history lesson pupils analysed pictures of Anglo-Saxon jewellery and noted down common features, before going on to design their own pieces. Pupils are given opportunities in many lessons to make predictions and hypotheses, for example in science lessons and at the reasoning club, where they apply their learning to word problems or deeper level challenges. Pupils say they are well prepared for the next stage of their education, and this is supported by the mature self-evaluative skills that are evident in lessons, and the independence with which they access suitable resources to improve the quality of their work.
- 3.11 Pupils have a strong sense of pride in their excellent academic and other achievements, speaking with great enthusiasm about their successes and the support they receive from the school. Pupils achieve widely beyond the formal curriculum, including success in national art and handwriting competitions. Several pupils have represented the UK in chess competitions and Year 4 pupils gained first place in an inaugural schools science quiz. Pupils enjoy considerable success in sports both locally and further afield, including a football team which has reached the finals of a national schools 5 a-side competition. The school provides opportunities for pupils to develop these skills through lessons and clubs, and regularly celebrates and showcases these talents in assemblies. Almost all parents who answered the pre-inspection questionnaire agreed that the school provides a suitable range of extra-curricular activities in fulfilment of the school's aim to provide a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum that recognises the unique gifts of each child.
- 3.12 Pupils demonstrate excellent attitudes to their learning, consistently demonstrating a willingness to learn and respect for those around them. They work well individually, in pairs and in groups and consistently show the confidence to collaborate willingly and effectively, whether building towers in Reception or discussing the methods for converting fractions into percentages in Year 6. They readily take responsibility for their learning and understand that they are the most significant contributing factor to their own success. Children in the EYFS are self-motivated, enthusiastically choosing activities from the wide range of high-quality resources prepared by staff who understand their individual needs and interests well. Pupils throughout the school apply themselves exceptionally well in lessons as seen in a Year 5 English lesson where pupils wrote additional verses to the Owl and the Pussycat. They are attentive, engaged learners who take pride in the presentation of their work, and make full use of the time they have in lessons. Consequently, they complete a high volume of work which contributes to the excellent progress they make. Pupils exhibit great strength of character in their learning, showing resilience, determination, and perseverance when faced with challenging activities.

The quality of the pupils' personal development

- 3.13 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 3.14 Pupils have an excellent understanding of themselves; they know where their strengths lie and how to go about making the most of them. This is because the school provides many opportunities for the pupils to develop their self-confidence, including PSHE lessons, awards assemblies and nurture groups. Older pupils explained how they use positive thinking strategies each day to build upon their self-confidence and self-esteem. Familiarity with good homework routines, an understanding of how to make friends and good test results ensure that pupils feel well prepared for the next stage of their academic lives. From the earliest age, pupils are able to focus on and celebrate their successes and to consider areas for further development in a balanced and proportionate way. This results from the highly effective pastoral care provided by staff throughout the school and the sensitive and supportive oversight of senior leaders. Staff know the children extremely well across the school and pupils told

inspectors they can freely approach adults for help and advice and do so with self-assurance. All pupils who responded to the questionnaire felt they were well-prepared for their next schools.

- 3.15 Pupils' decision-making skills are excellent. Children in the EYFS ably make decisions about their learning, deciding which activities to partake in and showing sustained interest in their choices. Older pupils are able to express maturely how they make decisions using their faith as a guide. Pupils are aware that they can contribute to changes around the school and make decisions about school life through their fellow pupils who are voted to become school councillors, digital leaders, or representatives of the Growing In Faith Together (GIFT) committee. In their responses to the questionnaire, almost all pupils felt that the school listens to what they have to say. Pupils are very clear about the positive impact of these groups, such as the installation of a 'friendship bench' in the playground to ensure that no one is lonely at break time, suggested by the school council. Pupils understand that the decisions they make are important contributors to their own success and well-being. This is seen through their responsible approach to managing their homework and self-checking of work, and their use of dictionaries, thesauruses, and practical apparatus, which all directly affect the outcomes of their endeavours.
- 3.16 Pupils' spiritual understanding is excellent. Pupils say they draw great comfort and guidance from the weekly liturgies that often focus on topics such as peace, friendship and kindness. In keeping with the school's Catholic ethos, there are daily opportunities for collective worship and reflection, and pupils respond respectfully to regular opportunities to reflect on their own faith and spirituality. Several times throughout the school day, pupils stop what they are doing to join in with collective prayer, for example during lunch and at the end of the day. Pupils spoke and wrote about what they had given up for Lent and could explain how they regularly take part in prayers for those less fortunate than themselves. Pupils show a deep understanding of the values and virtues that help them to appreciate the non-material aspects of life through discussions in lessons, whole school assemblies, and a range of annual services and events in the adjacent church. During a religious education lesson in Year 1 pupils demonstrated their knowledge of Catholic traditions, and recited the Lord's Prayer from memory. Pupils demonstrate a strong appreciation of the non-material; those interviewed spoke maturely about how 'money and big houses' were not the most important things because everyone is equal in the eyes of God.
- 3.17 Pupils have a very clear sense of right and wrong, showing excellent behaviour and respect for the rules around school; they listen attentively, follow instructions, and move around school safely. The Catholic ethos permeates every aspect of school life, resulting in pupils showing high levels of respect and responsibility. Pupils in Year 2 showed a very mature understanding of how to behave well towards others during an RE lesson, sensitively discussing the lyrics to the hymn *'Brother, Sister, Let me serve you'* and considering the real-world application of the phrases. Pupils are consistently keen to maintain high personal standards of behaviour throughout the school in response to the clear expectations set by senior leaders. They distinguish between right and wrong, and place great value on honesty and respect. Pupils take great pride in their school and are keen to do the right thing at the right time.
- 3.18 Pupils wholeheartedly embrace the many opportunities provided by the school to take responsibility for significant aspects of school life. They are eager participants in music and drama productions, members of sports teams, and digital leaders. Pupils support each other as lunch buddies and in paired reading sessions, and Year 6 pupils take on additional responsibilities as elected members of the school council and GIFT team with maturity. Pupils appreciate that their efforts and achievements are highly valued by the school, and this has a strong influence on the development of their self-esteem and self-confidence. Pupils contribute positively to the lives of others, both within the school and local community and also by supporting charities. During the inspection, pupils spoke about how they were bringing in money so that less fortunate children could have access to books as they marked World Book Day. Every Friday during Lent, the pupils complete a 'Walk for Hunger' circuit of the school grounds to raise money to provide food for those in need. Senior pupils are part of the school charities

group who promote fundraising activities for a wide range of national and international causes. In the local community the school has links to a nearby care home, where pupils write to residents and put on performances for them.

- 3.19 Pupils demonstrate accomplished collaboration skills and work extremely effectively together. This is evident from the youngest pupils through to the oldest pupils in the school. In Reception the pupils were observed working together to build a boat using construction blocks, and creating art work together. Pupils have regular opportunities to work in pairs and groups in lessons and outside the classroom. In lessons this is done through talking partners and group tasks. Opportunities to work as a team beyond the classroom are abundant, for example in team sports, school council and chess club matches.
- 3.20 Pupils have an excellent, and hugely positive, understanding and appreciation of people of faiths and cultures other than their own. They are well aware of how important it is not to discriminate against others because of their appearance or background. Pupils show a high level of respect for others and a tolerance to those from different backgrounds. They are able to discuss similarities and differences between faiths, expressing a genuine respect for all and benefiting from RE lessons in which they learn about religions beyond Catholicism. Pupils were very clear that their school teaches them to value others, saying that everyone is a gift from God, which means everyone is important and should be respected.
- 3.21 Pupils' understanding of the importance of a healthy diet and physical exercise is excellent; they demonstrate a strong awareness of the importance of good food choices in order to stay healthy. Pupils explained how the school provides healthy lunches containing protein and vegetables and that there is always a salad bar available for them. They are keen participants in sport and games activities, with older pupils taking part in matches against other schools each week. Pupils understand how to stay safe online as a result of the school's clear guidance in PSHE and ICT lessons, as well as through regular workshops and assemblies on these topics. Pupils were very articulate in explaining ways to manage this, including by not clicking on unknown links, reporting cyber bullying and safe online messaging. Pupils have a strong understanding of the importance of a balanced lifestyle, fostered through regular input on physical and mental health in assemblies and PSHE lessons. During a Year 2 PSHE lesson, pupils considered different situations which might make them angry and suggested ways they could make themselves feel better. Older pupils discussed ways of dealing with negative thoughts, demonstrating high levels of emotional intelligence, and reflecting on the benefits of sharing concerns with a trusted adult. Those interviewed were confident that they knew how to report anything untoward to their teachers or parents, and all those who responded to the questionnaire felt that the school was a safe place.

4. Inspection Evidence

- 4.1 The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with members of staff and with a group of governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended church and assemblies. Inspectors visited the facilities for the youngest pupils, together with the learning support and educational resource areas. The responses of parents, staff and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined curriculum and other documentation made available by the school.

Inspectors

| | |
|----------------------|--|
| Mr Chris Manville | Reporting inspector |
| Mrs Sue Clifford | Compliance team inspector (Former head, IAPS school) |
| Mrs Julia Shenolikar | Team inspector (Deputy head, ISA school) |