

St Simon of England Roman Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	118772
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	379682
Inspection dates	22–23 March 2012
Lead inspector	Margaret Coussins

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	210
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sarah Kennett
Headteacher	Elizabeth Willis
Date of previous school inspection	30 April–1 May 2008
School address	Noakes Meadow Ashford Kent TN23 4RB
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

Inspection team

Margaret Coussins

Additional inspector

Samuel Ofori-Kyereh

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed sixteen lessons totalling over eight hours, involving nine teachers, as well as hearing children read and looking at their work. Meetings were held with the headteacher, other staff with leadership responsibilities, members of the governing body and pupils.

Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documentation including the school's self-evaluation, the school development plan, pupils' progress records and the safeguarding procedures. Questionnaires from 99 parents and carers were received and analysed along with those from staff and pupils.

Information about the school

St Simon of England is smaller than the average-sized primary school. The large majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds. The next largest group is from any other White backgrounds. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language has increased considerably since the previous inspection and is above average. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs and supported by school action is above average. The proportion that is supported by school action plus or a statement of special educational needs is below average. These needs relate mainly to speech, language and communication or behavioural, social and emotional difficulties. Provision is made for the Early Years Foundation Stage in a Reception class. The school has recently been accredited as a Bike It school. The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- St Simon is a good school. Effective leadership has ensured that pupils’ progress is now good and standards are rising. It is not outstanding school, because attainment in mathematics is not as high as in other subjects and on occasion, pupils’ learning, particularly that of more-able pupils, is not fully extended and pupils are not clear about how well they are doing or how to improve.
- All groups of pupils achieve well. The school has correctly identified a continuing focus to improve pupils’ attainment in mathematics, which is weaker than it is in English.
- Teaching is good because lessons are well planned, inspiring and motivating. In mathematics lessons, the effective use of a good range of resources is not consistent across the school and work is not always precisely matched to pupils’ needs because of the current organisation of teaching groups.
- Pupils have good attitudes to learning and enjoy school. This is reflected in their attendance, which is above average. Good behaviour makes a positive contribution to pupils’ learning and a well-ordered, happy school.
- Leaders, including members of the governing body, share high aspirations and ambitions for the school’s future. Targets for the performance of all staff are well linked to school priorities and the monitoring of teaching is clearly focused on learning. Where weaknesses are identified, effective support is given.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment in mathematics by:
 - ensuring consistent and effective use of a range of good resources
 - ensuring that the way in which mathematics groups are organised in Key Stage 2 enables teachers to more precisely match work to learners’ needs, particularly for more-able pupils.
- Ensure that in all lessons, more-able pupils are challenged to fully extend their learning and that all pupils have a clear idea of how well they are doing and how they can do even better by providing more opportunities for them to evaluate their own and others’ progress and by fully embedding the marking

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and feedback procedures.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Pupils across the school achieve well and make good progress from their starting points. This includes disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language because of well-targeted support and interventions that accelerate their progress and enable them to close any gaps in their learning. By the time pupils leave school at the end of Year 6, the large majority of pupils, who has been at the school before the start of Year 3, reaches the expected Level 4, and more pupils than found nationally reach the higher Level 5 in English. Attainment at the end of Year 6 is broadly average as it is in Year 2. Almost all parents and carers feel their children make good progress and inspection evidence confirms this view.

Children start in the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills below the expected level for their age, make good progress and reach the required goals for learning by the time they move in to Year 1. A strong focus on developing children's language, number and personal skills permeates all activities in the Reception class so that children gain independence and are confident to express themselves. Children are given good opportunities to apply their early writing and number skills, for example writing notices in sentences for the Garden Centre role-play area. Their knowledge of phonics (linking sounds and letters) is good. Children can record simple addition and subtraction sums and work competently with higher numbers through exploring calendars and helping to work out how many children attend each day.

Pupils in Years 1 to 6 are starting to make faster progress than previously in mathematics where their problem solving and using and applying skills had held them back. Learning is purposeful and enthusiastic, particularly when good use of resources motivates and actively engages pupils. For example, pupils in Year 1 developed a good understanding of addition by using large dice and Year 6 pupils developed a clear concept of fractions and decimals through work on the interactive whiteboard. Attainment in reading by the end of Year 2 and Year 6 is above average. By Year 2, competent, fluent readers are clearly reading to make sense as well as using phonic knowledge to sound out unfamiliar words. By Year 6, pupils read confidently and with enjoyment. They have a good knowledge of a range of authors and can express preferences for different styles of writing and make good use of their reading skills for research in a range of subjects. The school has focused on improving writing and the impact is evident in pupils' current work. Pupils enjoy writing for a wide range of purposes in tandem with developing skills in grammar, punctuation and spelling. This was seen to good effect when Year 3 pupils corrected the teacher's deliberate mistakes and applied this knowledge to make good progress in editing and revising their own writing of a myth. Pupils enjoy practical, collaborative activities and work well together. This was demonstrated well when Year 6 pupils worked in small groups to plan a radio or television broadcast, an

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activity which particularly engaged boys, a group the school has targeted for improvement. Reading, writing, communication and mathematical skills are used well across the curriculum. Pupils' good attitudes to school and their determination and perseverance support their learning very well.

Quality of teaching

Most parents and carers and pupils feel that teaching is good and this positive view is confirmed by inspection findings. Pupils describe their lessons as fun and interesting. Notable features of teaching seen across the school are skilled questioning and the provision of opportunities for pupils to develop their speaking and listening skills through sharing thoughts and ideas with 'talk partners' and adults. Work is generally pitched at the right level so that pupils learn at a good pace, demonstrated well when solving mathematical problems and presenting information in an organised way in Years 3 and 4. On occasion however, teaching does not provide enough challenge for more-able pupils to enable them to fully extend their learning and make the accelerated progress of which they are capable. This is particularly the case in mathematics where the current grouping of pupils in Key Stage 2 can sometimes restrict the achievement of higher attaining pupils. Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language learn well because teachers and teaching assistants provide good support for the individuals and groups they work with. In some lessons resources effectively promote pupils' understanding and skills, for example in solving logical number problems in Year 6 and ordering numbers to understand their value in Year 2. The use of quality mathematical resources, however, is not consistent in all classes. There are some good examples of marking and feedback with opportunities for pupils to evaluate their own and others' progress that give pupils good pointers on how to improve their work. These aspects are not yet fully embedded across the school, which was reflected in the pupils' questionnaires, as approximately one third indicated that they only sometimes know how well they are doing. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, the classroom and outdoor area provide stimulating learning environments to promote progress in all areas of learning. Teaching and the planned curriculum effectively motivate and inspire pupils and promote a good work ethic, independent learning skills and pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Almost all parents and carers feel that the school keeps children safe and that behaviour in the school is good. These views agree with inspection findings. Most pupils in their questionnaire also said that behaviour is good and that they feel safe in school. A few pupils felt that behaviour was good only sometimes, but behaviour around the school and in lessons during the inspection was good with pupils showing care, respect and kindness towards each other and adults. School records show that this is typical of behaviour over time. In discussions, pupils said they are aware, that there are a few pupils, who find it hard to behave as well as others. They show acceptance of the needs of these pupils and say that teachers never let any

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inappropriate behaviour stop others learning. Behaviour policies are well established and promote the high expectations that pupils meet. As a result, almost all pupils manage their behaviour well with little intervention from adults. This was seen to good effect in a charity fundraising event, conceived and organised by Year 6 pupils and involving the whole school. Pupils were calmly moving around the school and into the grounds to visit various stalls and activities, all managed by Year 6. As well as ensuring it was a fun time, they looked out for the younger children, making sure they were safe. Good relationships and the atmosphere and ethos of the school make a positive contribution to pupils' learning and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Discussions with pupils indicate that they understand what constitutes bullying in all its forms including cyber bullying and prejudice-based bullying. They said they are confident that there is no bullying in school and equally confident that should any incidents occur teachers would act quickly and effectively.

Leadership and management

There is a shared drive from school leaders and staff to tailor the provision to provide the best possible learning experiences for each child in this school community. As a consequence, equality of opportunity is promoted well and the school ensures that pupils learn in a safe, secure and supportive environment without fear of discrimination. Members of the governing body and leaders ensure that arrangements for safeguarding meet all statutory requirements. Parents and carers are, rightly, unanimous in their view that the school takes good care of their children.

Leadership capacity is developed well with all leaders, including members of the governing body, taking key roles in monitoring and evaluating the work of the school with shared high expectations and ambition. School improvement planning is clearly focused on the right priorities as a result of rigorous monitoring and self-assessment and professional development is linked to the key priorities. The school has successfully made improvements to reverse the trend of underachievement seen in the years after the previous inspection, introduced a range of effective strategies to support pupils who are learning English and consolidated previous overall good performance, demonstrating a good capacity for further improvement.

The curriculum is effective because there is a strong focus on the development of literacy and numeracy as well as the good promotion of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. A good range of extra activities, including trips and visitors to school, enriches pupils' learning and broadens their experiences. The very large majority of parents and carers is positive about all aspects of the school's work. The school engages parents and carers well, providing regular communication on their children's progress. One parent's comment summed up the views of many, 'The supportive staff and strong sense of community values are reassuring and a role model for all. There is strong leadership, great communication and a truly positive atmosphere.'

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



26 March 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Simon of England Roman Catholic Primary School, Ashford TN23 4RB

Thank you very much for the welcome you gave us when we visited your school. We really enjoyed visiting your lessons, talking to you and your teachers and looking at the work you have been doing. You are very polite, friendly and interesting to talk to and we appreciated the way you helped us find out about your school. You are right to enjoy coming to St Simon because it is a good school.

- You achieve well during your time in school. You have done well to improve your writing and you are beginning to make much better progress in mathematics. Well done for this.
- The very positive attitudes you have to learning and your determination to succeed are two of the main reasons why you are doing well, including those of you who find learning harder than others and those of you who are learning English as an additional language.
- Your behaviour is good. You learn well together and support and care for each other.
- You think teaching is good in your school and we agree. Teachers plan interesting lessons to help you learn well and motivate you.

Although the school is doing well, there are still things it can improve. We have asked your school to help you do even better in mathematics by making sure that you all have the opportunity to use good resources to help develop your mathematical skills and understanding and for teachers to make sure that work is always pitched at the right level, especially for those of you who find mathematics easier than others. We have also asked the school to make sure that you are challenged in all lessons to learn as well as you can and that your teachers make sure you know how well you are doing and how you can improve.

You can help by always trying hard and doing your very best.

Yours sincerely

Margaret Coussins
Lead inspector

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