

# St Simon of England Roman Catholic Primary School, Ashford

Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	118772
<b>Local Authority</b>	Kent
<b>Inspection number</b>	313083
<b>Inspection dates</b>	30 April –1 May 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Richard Blackmore

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	209
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Sarah Kennett
<b>Headteacher</b>	Elizabeth Willis
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 December 2003
<b>School address</b>	Noakes Meadow Ashford TN23 4RB
<b>Telephone number</b>	01233 623199
<b>Fax number</b>	01233 640616

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<b>Age group</b>	4-11
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

The school is a little smaller than most other primary schools nationally. The majority of pupils are of White British background. Children enter the Foundation Stage with standards below those typically expected for 4-year-olds. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above the national average and the number of pupils with a statement of educational need is slightly below the national average. The proportion of pupils for whom English is an additional language is below average.

## Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

This is a good school. The school has introduced successful measures to promote good progress through effective teaching and learning opportunities. Evidence seen in lessons supports this. From a below average starting point pupils reach nationally expected standards in English, mathematics and science by the end of Year 6. The leadership and management are committed to raising standards further. Actions to improve upon recent results have involved increased and improved use of resources, and the use of themed days, such as 'Titanic Day', provide pupils with the opportunity to improve skills such as extended writing. Pupils' learning difficulties are quickly identified and individual support provided is carefully focused to improve pupils' skills and knowledge.

The Foundation Stage is satisfactory, providing opportunities for children to develop their skills in the different areas of learning through an adequate range of activities. However, children are not always provided with regular activities to improve skills such as writing, which is weaker than other areas of learning.

The curriculum is effective and provides opportunities firmly focused on learning through doing. The school's classrooms and learning areas have improved significantly since the last inspection, and this ensures pupils have an environment that encourages good progress and interest in a range of subjects. There are good links between subjects with a strong emphasis on the use and application of basic skills, particularly writing and calculating.

Pupils enjoy coming to school. Pastoral care is very good and a high priority is given to spiritual, moral and social understanding, which contributes to the pupils' positive attitudes and good behaviour, whether at work or play. Pupils feel valued by their teachers. A parent, expressing a typical view, commented, 'St Simon's is a caring school and will always try and put the needs of the child first.' This develops their self-esteem and confidence, turning them into assured young people with a good knowledge of right and wrong, and able to cooperate and work as part of a team. However, pupils' understanding of different cultures is not strong, and although capable, younger pupils are given insufficient responsibility to contribute fully to the school community. Pupils say they feel safe and well cared for. A few parents expressed concerns about communication between the school and home but the majority of parents talked about the positive involvement and relationship that exists between the school and parents.

Strengths in the quality of teaching include well developed and sensitive relationships, use of information and communication technology (ICT) and the use of teaching styles that maximise pupils' progress through the teachers' knowledge of how individuals learn best. However, in some lessons higher attaining pupils are not consistently provided with enough challenge. Marking does not always provide pupils with sufficient guidance on how to improve further, and pupils are not always aware of their targets.

Staff and governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses through the careful and accurate use of external data and the school's own information about pupil performance. Leaders at all levels are involved in the improvement planning process and accurately evaluate the effectiveness of its actions to improve outcomes for pupils.

## **Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 3**

Children enter the Reception class with some pre-school experience. Their attainment on entry is below typical expectations, particularly in emotional and linguistic skills. They make satisfactory progress overall. However, their emotional, communication and language skills are still low at the end of the Reception Year. Children behave well and respond with enjoyment to the learning environment. They demonstrate independence in their choice of activities and show consideration to each other. Adults are sensitive to the needs of the children. Relationships are a strength and help children to develop confidence when learning. They benefit from a balanced and satisfactory curriculum, which encourages them to explore and investigate resources. However, the opportunities to develop writing skills are sometimes limited. The outdoor area contributes significantly to the children's increased physical development and improving personal skills. Assessment procedures are in place but not rigorous enough to identify the next steps in pupils' learning and plan challenging activities to support further progression.

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

- Improve the quality of marking so that pupils have a clear understanding of what they need to do next, and are fully aware of their targets.
- Ensure that the most able pupils are set sufficiently challenging work.
- Develop and improve pupils' understanding of cultural diversity.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils make good progress overall. By the end of Year 6, standards are average, which, given pupils' below average starting points, represents good progress. Science results in 2007 indicated that standards in this subject were relatively weaker than in English and mathematics. Inspection evidence shows that this has been addressed. Progress in science is now good, which is an improvement on the previous year. Progress in English and mathematics is also good in Years 1 to 6. Good knowledge of pupils' current skills and knowledge through the use of assessment identifies where and when pupils underperform. In science, for example, the school correctly identifies underperformance in investigating skills. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress because they receive well planned support from teaching assistants.

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

### **Grade: 2**

The school is a happy and harmonious community. Children are polite with positive relationships. They behave well in classrooms and around the school. Their enjoyment of learning is reflected in their positive attitudes in lessons and their good attendance. They demonstrate good understanding of the importance of healthy eating and engage enthusiastically in games and physical activities. They feel safe and secure with reasonable confidence to approach members of staff for support and guidance. The school council promotes pupils' views and is engaged in projects to improve the school environment. They take on responsibilities of acting as 'Buddies' for other pupils. They feel they are respected and listened to, although younger pupils are not given as many opportunities to be responsible as older pupils. Their social skills and fund raising help to prepare them satisfactorily for their future economic well-being. Overall,

pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is good. However, their knowledge and understanding of the other cultures of modern Britain are underdeveloped.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teaching and learning are good. Staff have successfully cultivated atmospheres within classrooms that help pupils to progress quickly. Typically, teachers use varying teaching styles that reflect the different ways in which pupils learn best, and demonstrate a good understanding of different needs of pupils. This impacts positively on individual pupils' progress. Teachers use teaching assistants carefully and support staff make effective interventions to motivate and stimulate pupils to achieve highly. Overall, work is designed to meet pupils' particular needs and set realistic challenges for pupils of different abilities. However, although teachers plan work for higher attaining pupils, the level of challenge is insufficient for a proportion of the more able pupils. Marking of pupils' work does not consistently show pupils how they can improve.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum is well structured and relevant to the needs of pupils. Most pupils enjoy the curriculum provided. A typical view is, 'I like learning about different things.' Pupils have the opportunity to use skills learnt in one subject in a variety of other subjects, and this enhances learning and develops pupils' basic skills. ICT is used frequently to support pupils' progress and this is practised throughout the school with high quality work being produced. There is a good range of well attended clubs, including dance and football, which contribute to pupils' enjoyment of school. Visits planned form an important part of the interesting activities.

### **Care, guidance and support**

#### **Grade: 2**

The school provides a calm learning environment for its pupils. Staff are sensitive to the needs of individuals and help them move forward in their growth academically and personally, and this is acknowledged by parents. The good attention paid to the pupils' personal, social and emotional development is noteworthy. The school works in close partnership with parents and has developed links with a range of agencies, ensuring effective provision for the pupils. Carefully planned procedures help pupils settle into school when they start, and prepare Year 6 pupils for secondary education. Arrangements for safeguarding children are robust. Health and safety checks are secure. Risk assessments are effectively carried out and the school is safe and secure. However, not all pupils know their targets sufficiently well to support their learning and pupils are not sufficiently guided by teachers' marking. Consequently, pupils' knowledge of how to improve is sometimes limited. The school does not set sufficiently ambitious targets for the more able.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 2

The headteacher's dedicated leadership has enabled improvements since the last inspection and the school is in a strong position to move further forward. She has established a strong leadership team who are committed to providing high calibre experiences in all aspects of school life. Leaders and managers have made effective use of a wide range of information to identify the priorities for improving the school. An understanding of how pupils learn underpins the approach to ensuring good achievement of all pupils. Governors know the school well and take an active role in meeting their responsibilities. Subject leaders have monitored their areas and share in the school's evaluation of itself, but there is scope for greater involvement in evaluating the impact of teaching and learning on standards within their subject areas. There is good capacity to improve.

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## Annex A

## Inspection judgements

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

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

### Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

### The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

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

## Annex A

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

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

3 May 2008

Dear Pupils

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

Thank you for helping us when we visited your school. We enjoyed talking to you and you all helped us get to know your school really quickly.

We judge your school to be good. Your hard work, good behaviour and positive attitudes help you to make good progress. This is also because the teaching and curriculum are good. Some of the things that we liked best are the ways your teachers make lessons interesting and help you to enjoy your learning through themed days likes 'Titanic Day'. You told us how you enjoy your education because of the practical lessons, and you showed a good understanding of how to be healthy and keep safe. The adults look after you well and you told us that you can tell an adult in the school if you are worried about something.

We have asked the staff to do some things to make the school better. They have already been thinking about how to improve the school. I have suggested that the staff do the following things.

- Give you clear guidance about how to improve your work and make sure you know your targets.
- Make sure that the work you are given is challenging enough for each one of you.
- Improve your knowledge of other cultures.

We enjoyed our visit to your school. Thank you once again. Best wishes for the future

Richard Blackmore Lead inspector

**Annex B**



3 May 2008

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Lead inspector