

St Simon's Catholic Primary School

Bosden Avenue, Hazel Grove, Stockport, Cheshire, SK7 4LH

Inspection dates 21–22 October 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Early years provision		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Children start in the Nursery with skills typical of three-year-olds. Pupils achieve well as they move through school and attainment by the end of Year 6 is well-above average. This represents good progress from their starting points.
- Behaviour is good. Pupils have positive attitudes to their learning and enjoy their time in school very much. All pupils feel safe and attendance is consistently above average.
- Teaching is good. Teachers have good subject knowledge and use this to question pupils well and move their learning on. Teachers are well prepared and pupils make the most of their time in lessons.
- Leadership is good. The headteacher and governors know their school well and have clear plans in place for its continuous improvement. Hence, both teaching and achievement are improving strongly.
- The early years provision is good. It is well led and managed. Children behave well, enjoy their time here and develop confidence. They make good progress because teaching is good.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teaching is not outstanding. There is some variation in the progress that pupils make in some year groups. Sometimes, the most able pupils are not always challenged throughout lessons.
- Teachers' feedback to pupils is not always challenging and does not help them to understand clearly what it is they need to do next to improve their learning.
- The role of some subject leaders is not firmly embedded and they are yet to take full ownership of their areas of responsibility and strengthen their impact on pupils' achievement.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed eight part-lessons and also visited classrooms for short periods of time.
- Meetings were held with groups of pupils, senior leaders and teachers with responsibility for leading and managing subjects and key stages. A meeting was held with a group of governors and a representative from the local authority.
- Results from 39 online questionnaires (Parent View) were taken into consideration during the inspection. A small number of telephone conversations took place between inspectors and parents. In addition, inspectors spoke with parents at the start of the school day on the second day of the inspection.
- The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents, including the school's data showing pupils' current progress, documents relating to the school's own view of its performance, the school improvement plan, records relating to attendance, and documents relating to safeguarding.

Inspection team

Pritiben Patel, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Frances Farnorth

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- Most pupils are of White British background. A small number are from other White, mixed and other heritages.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is above average.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils eligible for support through the pupil premium funding is below average. The pupil premium is additional funding given to schools by the government to support pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those children who are looked after by the local authority.
- The school meets the government's current floor standard, which is the minimum expectation for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- Nursery and Reception children are taught together in the early years unit.
- The headteacher provides support to another headteacher and deputy headteacher in the Hazel Grove cluster of schools.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve achievement so that it is consistently good or better through the school by improving the quality of teaching from good to outstanding by ensuring:
 - the most able pupils are challenged throughout the lesson
 - teachers' feedback to pupils is challenging and helps them to understand clearly what it is they need to do next to improve their learning
 - all teachers make their expectations clear to pupils so that they know precisely what is expected of them.
- Develop further the role of subject leaders, including for those new to their post, so that they have greater ownership and their impact on pupils' achievement is strengthened by ensuring they:
 - have a clear overview of achievement in their subject across the school
 - check rigorously all aspects of their area of responsibility and put actions in place to bring about improvement.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher provides strong leadership. She is fully supported by governors, staff and the local authority. She is ambitious and has developed a culture of high aspirations and expectations for both staff and pupils.
- As one parent said, echoing the opinions of many, 'This is a good school.' It is also a school with happy staff and pupils. As the headteacher states, 'Every pupil is valued here.' Staff know pupils as individuals very well.
- The strong focus on daily monitoring by the headteacher is helping to bring about continuous improvement in all areas. For example, since the last inspection the quality of marking, teaching and achievement has improved. Leadership responsibilities have been shared among staff so that there is greater accountability across the school.
- The performance of teachers is checked rigorously. Strengths and areas for improvement are identified and support and training are provided to ensure teaching is good or better. Teachers are set clear targets linked to pupils' progress and their pay is dependent on performance.
- Assessment, although fully in place, is now developing to meet the requirements of the new curriculum. Pupils' progress is checked formally four times a year and support is provided for pupils if they are not progressing at least in line with expectations. This helps to promote equality of opportunity for all.
- Pupil premium money is spent effectively. For example, it is used to train staff in supporting pupils' play. As a result, after lunch, pupils are better prepared to learn. Netbooks have been purchased so that pupils have internet access at home and are able to complete homework.
- Leaders' evaluation of the school's performance is both accurate and honest. Senior leaders are clear about what is working effectively as well as areas that require improving.
- The school improvement plan details the correct priorities that are needed to take this good school to the next level.
- The curriculum is carefully planned to reflect the key themes of faith, aspiration and local and global community. As a result pupils are well prepared for their next stage in schooling as well as for life in modern Britain. A wide range of additional activities are offered to meet pupils' needs such as needlecraft club, film club, football, running and multi-skills. A range of educational visits are in place to make learning real, for example, to museums as well as residential.
- The physical education and sport funding is used well. A specialist teacher has been employed to enhance teachers' expertise and offer a broader range of sports in consultation with pupils, for example, girls' football. Pupils' fitness levels have improved as demonstrated by their assessments.
- Senior leaders work hard to ensure that parents are kept up to date with what is happening in the school. For example, weekly newsletters are sent home, the school website is highly informative and all staff are on the playground to meet and greet parents first thing in the morning. Most parents are very happy with all aspects of the school's work. However, a small minority feel that communication could be improved. The school has taken positive action to remedy this perception.
- The local authority keeps a check on the school's performance and assists staff with monitoring pupils' work as well as the provision in the early years.
- This school works collaboratively with a group of primary schools in the Hazel Grove cluster. Expertise and best practice are shared. The headteacher supports other senior leaders within this group.
- Subject leaders are eager and want to do their very best in the areas they lead. Some leaders are new to their post and are still developing a thorough understanding of their roles. All leaders provide training for other staff in school, observe lessons and check pupils' books. Subject leaders are working towards taking greater ownership of their areas to strengthen further their impact on achievement. They are beginning to develop a clear overview of achievement in their area of responsibility throughout the school by rigorously monitoring, evaluating and putting actions in place to bring about improvement.
- Safeguarding meets requirements.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are very committed to the school's success. They have a good understanding about what is going well and also areas that require improving. They are well trained, for example, in areas such as safer recruitment and e-safety as well as understanding pupils' performance and school data.
 - Each class has an assigned governor. This ensures that governors get to know well the school's work. Governors listen to readers and assist with educational visits as well as supporting school priorities in the classroom such as the development of punctuation.

- Governors contribute well to the school's evaluation of its work. The school development plan is reviewed regularly by them to ensure actions are implemented effectively. They have a good overview of achievement. They know how pupil premium funding is used and how it is helping to improve the achievement of disadvantaged pupils.
- Governors understand what the quality of teaching currently is and how it is being improved; for example, via training and the sharing of strong teaching practice between staff. Governors ensure good teaching is rewarded by contributing to the review of teachers' performance and pay.
- Governors hold the headteacher in high regard and are highly supportive of her. They challenge when appropriate, for example, in relation to finance and school improvement priorities. Governors set challenging targets for the performance of the headteacher and contribute to the review. Finances are in good order.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Their social development is good. The vast majority of pupils have positive attitudes to their learning and conduct themselves well around school, including at break and lunchtimes.
- Parents say that their children are happy and inspection evidence corroborates this. Pupils speak very fondly of their teachers and enjoy their time at school very much. This is evidenced by their consistently above-average attendance.
- Relationships between staff and pupils are strong and a highly caring and respectful environment is evident in school.
- There are different ways for pupils to show responsibility and take leadership roles. For example, Year 6 pupils are 'special friends' for Reception children. They look after the younger children, for example, at break and lunchtimes. School council members are elected and chosen on merit. Pupils are involved in raising money for charity, for example, by organising talent shows. Each class also leads worship on a monthly basis.
- Pupils say that bullying is something that they rarely experience. They say if they had any concerns they would readily speak with an adult in school. For example, they know that they can use the 'whisper button' on each pupil's virtual learning environment login page to share any concerns with the headteacher. There have been no permanent exclusions and only a very few fixed-term exclusions linked to pupils with specific behaviour issues.
- Pupils have a strong sense of right and wrong. They say racism is not an issue for them and pupils from different backgrounds get on well.
- Staff work hard to create much excitement and interesting opportunities for pupils. For example, pupils enjoy having a discussion with the headteacher over afternoon tea on Fridays. Visitors from different faiths such as Jewish and Muslim faith leaders help to develop pupils' understanding of different cultures. Pupils speak proudly of being part of the 'Connecting Classrooms' project where they learn about schools in countries such as Zambia.
- Pupils say that the word 'gay' is used occasionally by a small number of pupils. These incidents are resolved effectively by staff.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Parents say their children are safe and pupils certainly share this view. All pupils feel safe in school and have complete confidence in their teachers. Comments from pupils such as, 'teachers ensure your safety comes first' and 'teachers look out for you.' are typical.
- Pupils know how to keep themselves safe in different circumstances. They learn how to manage risks and make decisions, for example, when they are building dens outdoors in the Play Pod. Pupils know about e-safety and they know that they should not give their personal details to unknown people when using the internet. Pupils know what to do if a fire occurs and the importance of contacting the emergency services by dialling 999.

The quality of teaching is good

- Parents say that their children are taught well. Teaching over time is primarily good. This is demonstrated in pupils' good achievement.
- Relationships between staff and pupils are strong and make a good contribution to pupils' learning. Teachers work hard to ensure that classrooms and shared areas are bright, colourful and enticing for pupils.
- Pupils often work in pairs and groups so that they can discuss their learning and ideas with one another. This was seen in a Key Stage 2 numeracy lesson about 'prime factorisation'. The teacher asked pupils to identify 'prime numbers' in pairs from a hundred square table. Pupils were involved in much discussion and this helped their learning and understanding of number.
- Teachers know their subjects well and this enables them to question pupils skilfully so that learning is maximised. For example, in Key Stage 2 numeracy, pupils were learning about decimal numbers. When asked to justify which is the bigger decimal, 0.3 or 0.03, pupils were required to think hard about their reasons. This promoted their learning well.
- Support staff provide good support for pupils who are disabled or have special educational needs. This was seen in Key Stage 2 literacy where pupils were writing poems based on pictures from the Congo. The support teacher asked pupils a range of questions about the picture to deepen their understanding and support them with their writing. For example, they considered, 'What happens to the branches when the wind blows?' A secure understanding of the picture supported pupils' writing well.
- In Key Stage 2 numeracy, pupils were given the responsibility of checking and reflecting on their answers, marking their work and then setting themselves a target. This contributed well to pupils' understanding of what they needed to do next.
- Teachers' marking has been a focus for the school and pupils know that teachers use different coloured pens to tell them what they are doing well and what they need to do next. However, not all pupils are clear about their next steps because teachers' comments are not always precise enough. At times, marking is not challenging enough to move pupils on in their learning.
- Teachers share with pupils what they should achieve in an activity. However, these expectations are not always broken down enough for the pupils. This creates confusion for some pupils and hinders their learning because they are not entirely clear about what is expected.
- At times, the most able are not consistently challenged throughout their learning in lessons and this slows their progress. For example, pupils in Key Stage 2 numeracy were rounding a decimal to the nearest whole number. The most able pupils said they found the work easy.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children start the Nursery with skills that are typical for their age. Parents say that their children achieve well and inspection evidence corroborates this.
- In 2013, more pupils than nationally achieved the expected standard in the Year 1 screening check of pupils' understanding of the sounds that letters make. This is because teaching is good in this area and pupils are taught across the year groups according to their abilities and needs. Teaching is, therefore, specifically tailored to them. Results in 2014 remain higher than schools nationally.
- Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 is above the national average over time. Attainment in 2013 was in line with the national average rather than above because of the characteristics of this particular year group.
- Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 is well-above average, in reading, writing and mathematics. Information presented by the school about current pupils' achievement shows that this trend is continuing.
- Staff work hard to ensure equality for pupils. Pupils who require additional support with their learning are identified and supported so that no one falls behind.
- The small number of pupils from other White and mixed heritages achieve well and in line with their peers.
- Pupils who are disabled or have special educational needs achieve well because their individual needs are carefully monitored, individual plans are put in place and are reviewed regularly. In addition, extra support is provided if needed, such as in reading. Good liaison between staff is also helping to improve the achievement of this group.
- Over the past two years there have not been enough disadvantaged pupils in Year 6 to be able to make a reliable comparison between their attainment and progress and that of other pupils either in school or nationally. There were no disadvantaged pupils in Year 6 in 2013 and a very small number in 2014. Senior

leaders have identified that there is a gap between the attainment and progress of disadvantaged pupils and their peers in the current Year 6. Swift action has already been taken to rectify this and an achievement mentor has been employed to work with disadvantaged pupils and their families to raise the achievement of this group.

- The proportions of pupils making expected and more than expected progress in reading, writing and mathematics are higher than schools nationally by the end of Year 6. However, the information the school holds about pupil performance shows that there is some accelerated progress in some year groups but that this is not consistent across all year groups in the school.
- In 2013, the most able pupils attained well in all subject areas. However, this has not been sustained in 2014, based on the school's information. Senior leaders have identified this as a priority and action has been taken. More challenging reading books are available for the most able. Pupils have the opportunity to read on a daily basis and receive support from adults. Pupils are given more opportunities to apply their problem-solving skills in mathematics to increase their ability to reason. The teaching of writing has been adapted so that it is broken down into small steps so that pupils understand how a good quality piece of writing is put together. All of these developments are raising the achievement of the most able.

The early years provision

is good

- Children enter the Nursery with skills that are typical for their age. They make good progress in the early years and a greater proportion of children than nationally achieve a good level of development by the end of Reception. Therefore, children are well prepared to start Year 1.
- Children in Nursery and Reception work together as a unit. In addition, specific teaching is also given to the Nursery and Reception children separately so that their needs are met effectively.
- Staff are very caring and supportive of the children. This has a positive effect on children's self-esteem and confidence. Children are happy and are safe, develop very positive relationships with staff and one another, behave well and develop good perseverance.
- Teaching is good and both teaching and the curriculum are adapted regularly to meet the different needs of children. There is a good balance between teacher-directed activities and those chosen by the children themselves.
- The curriculum is good and all areas of learning are covered. Children participate in a good range of different activities with a key focus on developing basic reading, writing and mathematics skills. For example, children identify numbers on plastic fish in the outdoor pool as well as reading words with an adult to develop their understanding of the sounds that letters make.
- Leadership and management of the early years are good. The leader is reflective and strives for continuous improvement.
- Staff have improved outdoor learning since the last inspection but the good quality of children's learning indoors is not always reflected fully outdoors, particularly where an area of learning is not available to children outdoors.

What inspection judgements mean

School	Grade	Judgement	Description
	Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
	Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	106127
Local authority	Stockport
Inspection number	448298

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	197
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Peter Coleing
Headteacher	Mrs Elizabeth Inman
Date of previous school inspection	5 November 2009
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