

SS Simon and Jude CE Primary School

Newport Road, Great Lever, Bolton, Lancashire, BL3 2DT

Inspection dates

27–28 January 2016

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Outstanding
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Outstanding
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Outstanding
Early years provision	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected as an academy

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- Leaders' determined and no-nonsense approach to continually improving the quality of teaching across the school ensures that pupils make outstanding progress from their starting points.
- Teachers constantly strive to improve their practice. Those at the start of their career are very well supported by leaders and colleagues. As a result, teaching is never less than good.
- Leaders make effective use of the funding that they receive for disadvantaged pupils. As a result, this group of pupils make outstanding progress.
- Pupils' curiosity and enthusiasm for learning is ignited by a rich and relevant curriculum.
- Pupils are keen to do their very best and recognise the importance of learning. Consequently, classrooms are calm and purposeful.
- The school's sports funding is used well to increase the number of pupils enjoying a wide range of sports. However, as yet, not all teachers are fully skilled at teaching physical education.
- No one is in doubt of their responsibility to keep pupils safe. Policies are kept up to date and are understood by all.
- Pupils with special educational needs make outstanding progress because of high expectations and excellent support.
- Governors set challenging targets and hold leaders robustly to account for the impact of their actions.
- Behaviour across the school is excellent. Pupils listen attentively to their teachers and treat each other with respect.
- A rapidly growing and improving early years provision ensures that children's learning leaps forward when they join the school.
- Links with other schools in the multi-academy trust contribute to developing teaching and leadership.
- Teachers use questions expertly to deepen pupils' knowledge. During lessons they nearly always check that learning has been understood, though just occasionally this is less successful.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that sports funding is used effectively to develop the skills of teachers, particularly those new to the profession.

- Ensure that every teacher uses assessment during lessons incisively to recognise when work is too difficult and reshape the activity so that learning continues to move forward rapidly.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is outstanding

- The cohesive leadership of the executive principal and the school principal has enabled a culture of high ambition to become the driving force of improvement. As one governor summed up, 'Good is not good enough, whatever their background our pupils deserve an outstanding education.'
- Senior leaders' no-nonsense and relentless focus on improving the quality of teaching, through professional development, support and challenge as well as nurturing a culture where expertise is shared, ensures that teaching is strong across the school. Those teachers who are at the start of their career are very well-supported by colleagues and leaders alike.
- Leaders are highly effective in their use of assessment information to track the progress of every pupil in the school. This information is utilised to swiftly identify any pupil or group of pupils who are at risk of falling behind. Appropriate support is promptly put into place and monitored to ensure that it is effective.
- Mathematics and English leaders use a plethora of information to accurately identify the strengths and weaknesses of their subjects. Plans for improvement map out clear and appropriate actions, steering developments that continually improve the quality of teaching and learning across the school.
- Leadership of the provision for pupils with special educational needs is very effective. Robust systems are in place to measure how well this group of pupils makes progress. Support that is put in place is carefully monitored to ensure that it has a positive impact. The leader for special educational needs utilises her skills well to support improvements in the quality of teaching, for example, by delivering training on how to effectively use teaching assistants to have the greatest impact on learning. As a result, almost all pupils with special educational needs make strong progress across the school. In 2015, the progress that this group of pupils made was significantly above that seen nationally.
- Pupils are inspired to learn through the relevant and contemporary curriculum. Throughout the inspection, pupils proudly and eagerly shared their work, demonstrating a thirst to broaden their knowledge and understanding. A Year 6 pupil, for example, had been inspired to build replica models of the human eye and ear at home, developing a deep understanding of sight and hearing. Music features prominently in the curriculum. Pupils across Key Stage 2 learn how to play a musical instrument and develop their singing voice in Year 6. The curriculum is further enriched through a number of after-school and lunchtime clubs such as choir and art.
- Through the study of contemporary news stories pupils deepen their understanding of fundamental British values. In Year 6, for example, pupils developed their understanding of respect, discrimination and prejudice through learning about the Syrian refugee crisis. The promotion of respect and tolerance for other faiths and cultures is a significant strength. A number of parents, for example, visited the school recently to share aspects of their culture and faith with pupils.
- Leaders ensure that the funding the school receives to support disadvantaged pupils is utilised effectively to improve their outcomes. In the early years, for instance, funding is used to employ a speech and language therapist to improve children's communication skills. As a consequence, in 2015 the progress that disadvantaged pupils made was significantly above that of other pupils nationally.
- Sports funding is used successfully to increase the proportion of pupils involved in competitive sport. In the last year, pupils have been involved in competitions in sports such as dodgeball, badminton and cricket. Funding used to enhance teachers' skills has not been wholly successful. A small number of teachers observed during the inspection lacked the subject knowledge to deliver lessons that moved learning forward as well as that seen elsewhere in other subjects.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Governors are united in their ambition to ensure that pupils reach their full potential. They work closely with senior leaders at the start of each academic year to set challenging targets for improvement. They use the detailed information they receive from senior and subject leaders to ask challenging questions that effectively hold leaders to account for their actions.
 - Alongside the executive principal, governors have helped to ensure that the sponsorship of a multi-academy trust enhances the quality of teaching, learning and leadership at the school. The executive principal, for example, has been able to provide promotional opportunities for a number of teachers and teaching assistants; consequently, retaining high calibre staff and developing leadership capacity.
 - Governors have an effective overview of the robust performance management process that is in place for all members of staff.

- Safeguarding is effective. Leaders are meticulous in ensuring that safeguarding policies and procedures are up to date and effective. A robust safeguarding induction ensures that teachers and other adults new to the school are in no doubt of their responsibilities to keep pupils safe. The diligent work and determination of the learning mentor contributes significantly to this aspect of the school's work.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is outstanding

- Classrooms across the school exude a sense of purpose. Teachers set high expectations and consequently pupils strive to produce their best work in lessons.
- 'Teachers make our learning fun and interesting' was a typical comment from pupils who spoke to inspectors. In a geography lesson in Key Stage 2, for instance, pupils' learning moved forward effectively as they excitedly discovered how tornados are formed by observing a 'tornado in a bottle'.
- Teachers use images and resources well, particularly in Key Stage 1, to help pupils develop and embed their understanding of new ideas. For example, in a Key Stage 1 mathematics lesson, a small group of pupils were able to successfully order numbers because of their use of practical resources such as a number line.
- Teachers use assessment information to challenge further those pupils who are ready to deepen their understanding. In a Year 4 mathematics lesson, for example, the class teacher ensured learning moved forward rapidly for a group of pupils by introducing a problem solving activity that developed reasoning skills about shape.
- Teachers throughout the school have established an ethos in their classrooms that builds pupils' confidence and self-esteem. Success is celebrated and mistakes are used sensitively as opportunities for learning. Consequently, pupils engage in activities with enthusiasm and confidence, contributing strongly to the progress they make in their lessons. In a Year 5 English lesson, for example, pupils' learning about persuasive language moved forward rapidly when they took part in a role play activity.
- Questioning is used well by teachers and teaching assistants to deepen understanding. In a reading lesson, for instance, the teacher used 'thinking questions' effectively to develop pupils' inference and deduction skills.
- Learning in many classes moves forward at pace because teachers use a range of teaching strategies that help pupils think more deeply about their learning. In a Year 6 lesson, pupils consolidated and deepened their learning about fractions when they worked collaboratively to justify their answers to one another.
- Teachers take exceptional care to help pupils successfully make even the smallest steps in their learning, fostering skills, knowledge and understanding so that firm foundations are in place. In a lesson on phonics (the sounds that letters make), for example, pupils' learning advanced well because their teacher focused precisely on the pronunciation of combinations of letters.
- Teaching assistants make a significant contribution to pupils' learning across the school. This is especially evident in the excellent support that they give to those pupils with special educational needs. In a mathematics session, for example, pupils made excellent progress because the teaching assistant took care to show clearly what strategies were needed to recognise multiples of numbers.
- In the overwhelming majority of classes, teachers incisively check on the progress that pupils make in lessons. This ensures that pupils who are not secure in their understanding are quickly identified and effectively supported to move forward in their learning. For a very small number of pupils these checks are not as sharply focused, resulting in progress that is not as strong when work is particularly challenging.
- Pupils value the regular learning review meetings that teachers hold with them on a one-to-one basis. Those who spoke to inspectors explained that these meetings help them to identify exactly what it is they need to do to improve their work and to be ambitious.
- Those parents who spoke to inspectors or expressed a view on the online survey were fulsome in their praise of the school. One parent, for example, stated that he volunteers at the school 'to pay back' the work they have done to help his children.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding. Adults throughout the school act as exemplary role models. Pupils who spoke to inspectors stated that teachers treat them equally, fairly and with respect. As a result, pupils feel confident in class to volunteer answers and share

their ideas – contributing strongly towards their learning.

- The school is a community of harmony. Respect and tolerance run as golden threads, permeating every aspect of school life. As one pupil stated, 'If someone is different we treat them the same, we accept differences because we are all unique.' Displays celebrating cultural difference, for example on China following a visit by the executive principal, further embed pupils' understanding of a wide range of countries and cultures.
- Pupils relish their roles of responsibility, such as being prefects or school council members. They take their roles seriously, preparing speeches to persuade their classmates to elect them to their roles. Pupils are listened to and have a tangible impact on improving the school environment. School councillors successfully acted on an idea shared through a class suggestion box to provide an activity park by 'persuading the headteacher to ring the builders'.
- Pupils work with school leaders to help ensure that everyone understands how to stay safe. School councillors, for example, invited a road safety officer into school to give pupils advice. Pupils have a good understanding of how to stay safe whilst online. They state that they never divulge personal details.
- Leaders ensure that pupils are taught a broad range of explicit skills that help them to become well-rounded citizens and successful learners. Eight 'personal learning goals', including resilience, cooperation and thoughtfulness are taught and referred to at every opportunity. As a consequence, pupils display a deep understanding of areas such as morality and being adaptable and how these apply to their own lives.
- Pupils are rightly proud of their efforts to raise money for and support a range of charitable causes, including the shoebox appeal and the sponsorship of a child in Peru.
- Pupils say that any forms of bullying are rare. They trust adults to help them resolve any issues. The work of the learning mentor to support emotional and social problems is particularly appreciated by pupils. As one pupil stated, 'We can see Mrs Colman at any time, she is a kind of first aider for these sort of things.'

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Pupils throughout the school display a thirst for learning. They value their education and understand its importance, resulting in classrooms that are calm and purposeful. Pupils listen attentively to their teachers and follow instructions eagerly and without fuss. Learning in almost every lesson moves forward fluently and without interruption.
- While working together, pupils listen to their peers with respect, valuing differences of opinion. Their discussions, for instance, during a problem solving activity in a mathematics lesson in Key Stage 1, allowed them to justify their thoughts and consequently embed their learning.
- All parents who completed a recent school questionnaire state that their child enjoys coming to school. Pupils who spoke to inspectors also confirmed this view. Consequently, pupils do not miss school often. The level of persistent absence is below that seen nationally and has fallen for the past two years. Overall attendance is in line with the national average.

Outcomes for pupils

are outstanding

- Leaders' uncompromising and relentless drive to improve the quality of teaching and learning has ensured that the progress pupils make by the time they leave Year 6 has been significantly above the national average for the past three years.
- Teachers' excellent subject knowledge ensures that pupils develop and can apply their phonics skills very well. Those pupils that read to inspectors did so with fluency and were able to apply their learning to tackle difficult words. The proportion of pupils in school who reach the expected standard in the national phonics screening check for Year 1 has increased year on year, so that in 2015 it was well above that seen nationally.
- Evidence both from books and lesson observations shows that pupils make sustained and strong progress in mathematics. Teachers plan lessons that build on pupils' prior learning so that skills, knowledge and understanding are fully embedded. Pupils' books demonstrate that they are fluent in calculating in all areas of number. Nonetheless, leaders recognise that opportunities to apply learning to solve problems are not fully embedded across the school. Appropriate actions and training for staff is in place to address this.
- Teachers grasp every opportunity to develop pupils' writing skills across a broad range of subjects. In a Key Stage 2 class, for instance, pupils wrote news scripts to report on recent severe flooding across the locality. The basic skills of spelling, punctuation and grammar are applied equally well by pupils in their writing in

English lessons and the broader curriculum. In 2015, almost half of all pupils reached standards above those expected for their age in writing by the time they left Year 6.

- Observations of reading lessons show that current pupils make good progress, particularly when guided sessions are led by an adult. However, in a small number of classes opportunities to develop learning even further are not as strong because independent activities do not always fully ignite pupils' interest. A love of reading is promoted effectively. Pupils from each class visit the well-stocked school library regularly and are attracted to read a broad spectrum of books through displays such as 'books to read before you are 11'. The proportion of pupils who made expected and above expected progress in reading by the time they left school in 2015 was above that seen nationally.
- Disadvantaged pupils make outstanding progress. Excellent systems to track their achievement across the school ensure that leaders swiftly identify any pupils in danger of not making the gains in the learning that they are capable of. Robust action is immediately taken to address any identified issues. As a result, this group of pupils have made progress that is significantly above the national average for the past three years.
- Pupils with special educational needs make outstanding progress in reading, writing and mathematics. This is because teachers, teaching assistants and the leader of the provision for this group of pupils ensure that work is well-matched to their needs. Consequently, for the past two years, the progress that pupils with special educational needs have made by the time they leave the school has been significantly above that seen nationally.

Early years provision

is outstanding

- Children get off to a flying start in the early years due to excellent teaching and aspirational leadership. From starting points that are generally below and well below those expected for their age, children make excellent progress. The proportion of children reaching a good level of development has risen rapidly in recent years and is now broadly in line with that seen nationally. Consequently, children are well prepared to move on to the next stage of their education in Key Stage 1.
- Ambitious and uncompromising leadership has ensured that the new nursery provision for two- and three-year-olds, opened in September, has hit the ground running and reflects the strong practice elsewhere in the school. Strengths and weaknesses are identified through accurate self-evaluation and plans for further improvement are clearly mapped out.
- The newly renovated classrooms for the nursery provision provide a bright and welcoming environment that supports learning. Well-planned activities appropriately meet the needs of this younger group of children, enthusing and igniting children's learning. One child, for example, re-told the entire story of *The gingerbread man* to an inspector while labelling a picture.
- Parents who spoke to inspectors were overwhelming in their praise of the early years. Parents are encouraged to join in activities with their children at the start and the end of the day so that they are able to support learning and celebrate success. Workshops, on reading and phonics for instance, help parents to develop their own skills to help their children learn at home.
- Children who have English as a second language flourish in the early years. This is because the support the school provides is highly effective. Bilingual teaching assistants provide expert assistance to children who lack confidence, giving them a voice and helping them to rapidly develop their language skills.
- Teachers use what they know about prior learning to plan activities that challenge children appropriately and encourage them to think deeply. Learning for one boy, for instance, moved forward rapidly as he grappled with a mathematical puzzle to work out how many scoops of sand were required to fill various containers.
- Independence is taught and encouraged at every opportunity. Children's learning moved forward effectively, for example, when they listened to pre-recorded challenges on 'talking pegs'. Adults are adept at ensuring that learning does not falter and intervene skilfully to provide extra support and challenge when needed. Children's learning leapt forward rapidly, for example, when their teacher expertly used a game of hide and seek to develop counting and positional language skills.
- Children play and learn together calmly and sensibly. This is because adults have high expectations and model behaviour and language very well. A girl in Reception, for instance, was observed helping a classmate to count and recognise numbers during an activity when she stated, 'That isn't a number five, let me help you count up.'

School details

Unique reference number	138957
Local authority	Bolton
Inspection number	10001086

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	2–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	484
Appropriate authority	The local governing body
Chair	Mrs Alex Johnson
Executive Principal	Simon Bramwell
School Principal	Elizabeth Peacock
Telephone number	01204 333583
Website	www.sssj.bolton.sch.uk
Email address	BramwellS@sssj.bolton.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected as an academy

Information about this school

- SS Simon and Jude CE Primary School became an academy school on 1 November 2012. When its predecessor school, St Simon and Jude CE Primary School was last inspected by Ofsted it was judged to be good overall.
- The school is a larger-than-average sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is above average (pupil premium is additional funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, and those who are looked after by the local authority).
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is well above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils for whom English is not or believed not to be their first language is well above the national average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is broadly similar to the national average.
- In 2014, the school met the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- The school opened a nursery provision for two-year-old children as well as a nursery for three-year-olds in September 2015.
- The school runs a breakfast club.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed lessons in each class of the school, including on a learning walk with the head of school.
- Discussions were held with senior leaders, members of staff (including newly qualified and recently qualified teachers), representatives of the local governing body and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors examined a wide range of documentation, including that relating to safeguarding, behaviour and attendance, school improvement planning, assessment information and reports on the quality of teaching.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils informally during the school day and observed them during playtime, lunch and before and after school. They also met formally with two small groups of pupils, including the school council, to chat about their learning and behaviour and safety.
- Inspectors heard a number of children read.
- Inspectors took note of displays around the school and the work in the outdoor areas.
- A range of pupils' books were checked.
- Inspectors spoke to a small number of parents at the start of the day. They also took account of the 11 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) as well as a recent school questionnaire. Inspectors also took note of the 39 responses they received to the inspection questionnaire for school staff.
- Four further Ofsted inspectors joined the inspection on the second day of the inspection.

Inspection team

Martin Bell, Lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Adrian Francis	Ofsted Inspector
John Daley	Ofsted Inspector
Stephen Helm	Ofsted Inspector
Catherine Parker	Ofsted Inspector

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