

Inspection of an outstanding school: Ss Simon & Jude CofE Primary School, Bolton

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

Inspection dates:

10 and 11 November 2021

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of outstanding as a result of this initial (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a full inspection were carried out now. The next inspection will therefore be a full (section 5) inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy coming to school. They like making new friends. Pupils said that they are happiest when learning in class or when helping each other to do new things.

Teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. Pupils' conduct is impeccable in class. They also behave very well as they move around the school.

Teachers make learning interesting, including for children in the early years. They expect pupils to do their best. Most pupils achieve well. Teachers provide timely support for those pupils who need it. Pupils appreciate this extra help. Even so, a few pupils struggle to remember some of the important information that they have been taught.

Pupils enjoy taking part in the range of interesting activities on offer through the wider curriculum. They like to play different musical instruments or take on leadership roles, for example as lunchtime 'ambassadors'.

Pupils celebrate the rich diversity in their school. They enjoy times of reflection and worship together. They demonstrate respect and understanding of different faiths and cultures. Pupils benefit from a strong programme of wider personal development.

Overall, pupils are safe and happy in school. They said that staff listen to them. However, some pupils said that they do not enjoy playtimes as much as the rest of their time at school, because there is little to do. Although bullying is rare, some pupils, and a small number of their parents and carers, feel that it is not resolved consistently well by leaders.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders, governors and trustees have agreed a curriculum that matches the ambition of the national curriculum. Leaders' curriculum plans, including in the early years, set out clearly what pupils are expected to know and learn in each year group. Despite this, prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, leaders made changes to their curriculum because they recognised that some pupils were not learning as well as they should. The impact of the changes that leaders have made is beginning to show. In the areas of the curriculum that leaders have already developed, pupils have a stronger recall of new learning. Pupils who had fallen behind are now catching up quickly.

Even so, some weaknesses in curriculum planning remain. For example, there are some pupils in key stage 1 who are not able to remember the sounds or 'tricky words' that they have learned through the school's phonics programme. In addition to this, some pupils across the school cannot recall what they have learned previously in some aspects of the wider curriculum.

Leaders are determined that all pupils will be able to read well. Leaders have established that the current phonics programme is not working for some pupils. Consequently, leaders are ready to implement a new phonics programme from the early years, to support pupils who find it more difficult to learn to read. Leaders are preparing to train staff to deliver the new programme.

Despite the less than positive start that some pupils have made in learning to read, which has been exacerbated by the disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, teachers in key stages 1 and 2 are effective in helping these pupils to catch up. By the time pupils are in key stage 2, most are fluent and accurate readers. They practise their reading with suitable books that capture their interest. Pupils enjoy earning rewards for practising their reading at home.

Teachers use assessment systems well. They know exactly what their pupils do or do not know. They make effective use of this information to plan what pupils need to learn next. Teachers make sure that pupils who are struggling to keep up, focus on the most important learning.

Teachers and leaders are adept at identifying pupils who may have special educational needs and/or disabilities. They are also aware of the additional challenges that pupils who speak English as an additional language may face. Teachers help pupils to access the planned curriculum well.

All pupils, including children in the early years, demonstrate excellent attitudes in class. This means that pupils get the most out of their lessons and the support that their teachers provide.

Leaders provide a wide range of activities that support pupils' wider development. Pupils were keen to show inspectors the school's 'values tree'. It reminds them about the qualities required to achieve their aspirations in later life. Teachers support pupils to be

self-reflective and to take responsibility for their own learning. Pupils respond well to opportunities to reflect on their own personal development.

Some pupils told inspectors that they do not have enough opportunities to develop their social skills and friendships through play at breaktimes. This is especially the case for pupils who speak English as an additional language.

In discussion with the principal, the inspector agreed that curriculum planning for early reading, and subjects other than mathematics and English, may usefully serve as a focus for the next inspection.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders, governors and trustees make sure that all pupils are safe. Leaders ensure that staff are effectively trained to identify when pupils might be at risk. Staff are vigilant. They know how to support pupils to understand how to keep themselves safe, including when they are online.

Leaders have effective systems in place to ensure that pupils are kept safe while they are in school, including at breaktimes.

Leaders work closely with other agencies when vulnerable pupils need additional support. They ensure that they know where pupils are when they need to travel to or from other countries.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The delivery of the phonics programme currently in use does not meet the needs of some pupils. Some younger pupils do not build up the secure phonics knowledge that they need in the early years and in Year 1. This makes it more difficult for some pupils to learn other aspects of the curriculum, as they are behind in reading. Leaders should ensure that the new phonics programme, due to be implemented in the very near future, is delivered well so that it supports all pupils to have secure phonics knowledge.
- Some pupils do not develop a sufficiently deep body of subject knowledge to recall key information about some foundation subjects. They do not achieve as highly as they could. Leaders need to continue to refine their curriculum plans, especially in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, so that pupils build up their knowledge as well as they can from the early years to Year 6.
- Some pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to develop their social skills at playtimes. This slows down how well pupils make friends, especially some of those pupils who speak English as an additional language. Leaders need to ensure that all

pupils benefit from high-quality activities that support pupils' personal development in social times, as well as during curriculum time.

Background

When we have judged a school to be outstanding, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains outstanding. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good or outstanding school, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the section 8 inspection as a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be outstanding in January 2016.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	138957
Local authority	Bolton
Inspection number	10199511
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	600
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of local advisory board	Alex Johnson
Principal	Katie Jones
Website	www.sssj.bolton.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	16 January 2016, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- This school is part of the Vantage Academy Trust.
- Since the previous inspection, there have been several changes to the leadership arrangements. A new principal has been appointed. There has also been a restructuring of the local advisory board and the senior leadership team. There have been other key leadership appointments, including a new leader for the early years.
- The school has significantly increased its number on roll since September 2020.
- Many pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- This school is a Church of England school. Its last section 48 inspection took place in February 2017.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection that the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.

- Inspectors spoke with the principal and other leaders in the school, including the special educational needs coordinator. Inspectors spoke with a group of governors and trustees, including the chair of the local advisory board and the chief executive officer.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation for safeguarding, including: the school central record of staff and visitors; staff training records; records of safeguarding; and samples of the records kept on individual pupils.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics, music and history. They talked with the curriculum leaders of these subject areas. Inspectors also visited lessons, looked at examples of pupils' work, held discussions with teachers and talked with pupils. Inspectors looked at samples of work from other areas of the curriculum.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour at breaktimes and lunchtimes. They watched pupils as they moved around the school.
- Inspectors spoke with groups of pupils about their experiences at school.
- Inspectors looked at the responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, and the free-text responses from parents to find out their views of the school. They also spoke with parents as they dropped their children off at school.
- Inspectors also considered the responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire.
- There were no responses to Ofsted's pupil questionnaire.

Inspection team

Claire Cropper, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Joan Williamson

Ofsted Inspector

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