

# Inspection of St Simon of England Roman Catholic Primary School, Ashford

Noakes Meadow, Ashford, Kent TN23 4RB

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Inspection dates:

30 November and 1 December 2022

## **Overall effectiveness**

## **Requires improvement**

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The quality of education

**Requires improvement**

Behaviour and attitudes

**Good**

Personal development

**Good**

Leadership and management

**Requires improvement**

Early years provision

**Requires improvement**

Previous inspection grade

**Good**

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

This school is a calm and caring place, where pupils are encouraged to value their education and develop the qualities needed for when they eventually enter the world of work. They know that teachers will always help them if they are worried about anything.

Pupils behave sensibly in their lessons and in the school grounds, where they play kindly together. They particularly enjoy challenging themselves on the trim trail, but equally value spending quieter time in the library or faith garden.

All pupils are taught the value of making allowances for each other and behaving in positive ways which encourage hopefulness, kindness and endurance. They know that being jealous, conceited or rude damages relationships. Staff consciously model the school values through the daily life of the school. Pupils know the most important of the school values is to genuinely love each other and treat each other as equals.

Pupils are encouraged to consider their responsibilities for taking care of the planet. They learn about how people have changed the natural world through tourism and industry and how it might be protected. Sometimes, their learning is not as strong as it should be because leaders are still defining what pupils should learn and when in some parts of the curriculum.

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

Leaders want pupils to achieve their very best in this school. Trust leaders are working with them to make that a reality. Plans to further develop reading, writing and the wider curriculum, including in the Reception Year, are under way but in the early stages of implementation. The trust is also supporting governors to understand their statutory duties more fully.

Pupils mostly benefit from the new reading curriculum. Leaders make sure all staff have the training they need because they are determined pupils will learn to read more securely and so be able to enjoy other subjects. During phonics lessons, teachers pick up on any misconceptions quickly and help pupils learn the correct sound or spelling. They use assessment well to make sure pupils get the support they need if they are struggling to keep up or need to catch up. Staff encourage all pupils to take an interest in the books in their classrooms and in the school library.

Pupils mostly understand and remember what they have learned in mathematics. Leaders make sure that the curriculum is broken down into small enough steps for pupils to master new learning confidently. Teachers regularly review past learning with pupils so they can remember key knowledge automatically. Pupils can apply their mathematical knowledge to solving problems. They know that making mistakes can be a good thing because it helps them to learn.

Leaders in other subjects are still developing exactly what pupils must learn and when. The content in most subject areas has been broadly identified in line with the national curriculum. Teachers know what they must teach in each year group. However, the order in which they should teach and what they should check pupils have learned have not been determined. Leaders have planned the curriculum in Reception Year but it is not linked to the rest of the school curriculum. As a result, children are not as ready as they could be for the move to Year 1.

Staff know pupils well and build good relationships with families and external agencies to identify and understand different learning and medical needs. Teachers have benefited from working with leaders in the trust and other schools to learn how to adapt activities so that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) can learn the same curriculum as their classmates. However, because the curriculum is still being developed, pupils with SEND do not learn as well as they could.

Behaviour in lessons and around school is good. Pupils are encouraged to understand their feelings and develop self-control through techniques such as breathing calmly. There is a consistent approach to managing their behaviour. Where pupils still struggle to behave well, staff help them by discussing the issue and reflecting on what to do next.

There are plenty of opportunities for pupils to develop character and a sense of social responsibility. Leaders have set up a 'job centre', where pupils can apply, through a recruitment process, for roles in school such as finance, salad bar, light monitoring or litter picking. They earn virtual 'St Simon's pounds', which can be spent on events such as baking a cake with a member of staff.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

However, leaders do not always keep their safeguarding training up to date and local governors are not challenging enough in their responses to this. Trust leaders have taken recent action to support the governing body and school leaders in making sure safeguarding processes are secure. School staff understand their safeguarding responsibilities well. They know how to identify pupils in need of support or at risk of harm and are confident to use the school reporting systems.

Pupils know how to protect themselves from harm in different situations, including online.

## **What does the school need to do to improve?**

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- The curriculum beyond reading and mathematics is not fully developed. Because of this, pupils' learning is not as secure as it should be. Leaders should identify

the precise knowledge to be taught and the order in which it should be covered in all subjects.

- Governors do not have a good enough grasp of their statutory duties. They do not provide effective challenge and support. Trustees should ensure that governors have the appropriate training to fully understand their role and responsibilities.
- The content and sequencing of the curriculum do not start in the Reception Year. Children are not prepared well enough for Year 1. Leaders should ensure that the early years curriculum is designed to teach children the knowledge and skills they need to learn the Year 1 curriculum.

## 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.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	141067
<b>Local authority</b>	Kent
<b>Inspection number</b>	10242100
<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Academy converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	5 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	207
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Michael Powis
<b>Headteacher</b>	Peter McCabe
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.st-simon.kent.sch.uk">www.st-simon.kent.sch.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	12 July 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- This school is a Roman Catholic school. The last denominational inspection (section 48 inspection) took place on 20 June 2017.
- The school is part of the Kent Catholic Schools Partnership.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

## Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- During the inspection, the inspectors met with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher and senior trust leaders. The lead inspector also met with the chair and vice-chair of the local governing body and the chair of the board of trustees.

- Inspectors carried out deep dives into these subjects: early reading, mathematics, geography and art. For each deep dive, the inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The inspectors reviewed the arrangements for safeguarding by scrutinising safeguarding records and interviewing staff, and through discussions with pupils.
- The views of parents and carers were considered through their responses to Ofsted Parent View. Further views of pupils and staff were gathered through Ofsted's online surveys, interviews and discussions conducted throughout the inspection.
- The inspectors reviewed a range of the school's documents, including self-evaluation reports, minutes of governing body meetings and trust board meetings, and behaviour incident logs.

### **Inspection team**

Jo Brinkley, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Kirstine Boon

Ofsted Inspector

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