

Inspection of Ss Simon & Jude CofE Primary School, Bolton

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

Inspection dates: 12 and 13 March 2024

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Outstanding

The principal of this school is Katie Jones. This school is part of Vantage CE Academies Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Jill Albertina, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Phillip Mason.

This school was last inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 eight years ago and judged 'Outstanding' under a previous inspection framework. This reflected the school's overall effectiveness under the inspection framework in use at the time. From then until November 2020, the school was exempted by law from routine inspection, so there has been a longer gap than usual between graded inspections under section 5 of the Act. Judgements in this report are based on the current inspection framework and also reflect changes that may have happened at any point since the last graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils feel well cared for at this school. They are happy and have positive relationships with each other. Their attitude to their learning is impressive, as is their behaviour. They are sensible and courteous when they move around the school.

The school has high expectations for what pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), should achieve. Pupils make positive progress in their learning, often from low starting points. Many achieve well by the time that they leave key stage 2. They become capable writers and mathematicians.

Pupils have a range of opportunities to take on responsibilities around the school. For example, play leaders organise different activities for fellow pupils during social times. They diligently walk around the playground to check that nobody is left out.

Pupils' learning is enhanced through trips, such as those to the town's museum and the local football stadium. They have many opportunities to participate in sporting competitions. Pupils told inspectors that they were looking forward to the upcoming cross-country competition that was taking place during the week of this inspection. Pupils also learn how to play musical instruments, such as the violin. They perform to their families using these instruments at the end of each academic year.

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

The school community suffered significant fire damage to the original school building recently. The school has worked commendably to minimise the impact of this event on pupils' education. It has swiftly developed a temporary site, known as the 'learning village', for pupils to continue their learning almost unimpeded.

The school has ensured that pupils in the Nursery classes for two-year-olds through to pupils in Year 6 experience a broad and balanced curriculum. In some subjects, the school has carefully considered the small steps of knowledge that pupils should learn. It has designed these subject curriculums so that content is taught in a logical, coherent way. In these subjects, pupils build a secure body of knowledge over time. However, in a few other subjects, the school's curricular thinking is less precise. In these subjects, the school is not clear about the crucial knowledge that pupils should learn and how it should be taught. Consequently, pupils do not develop a deep understanding of the content in these subjects.

Staff carry out effective checks on pupils' learning during lessons. They provide strong guidance to pupils to quickly correct their misconceptions. That said, the school does not check how well some subject curriculums are being taught and the overall impact that these curriculums are having on what pupils know and remember. This sometimes means that some weaknesses in curriculum design and delivery are not addressed as swiftly as they could be.

The school has secure systems in place to quickly identify pupils who may have SEND. Pupils with SEND are ably supported by staff to access their learning effectively. These pupils achieve well.

The school prioritises reading. It promotes a love of reading through carefully chosen high-quality texts that broaden pupils' moral and cultural understanding of the world. Children begin the school's new phonics programme as soon as they start in the early years. They read books that match well to their current knowledge of phonics. The school organises a range of extra support for those pupils who struggle to read confidently. This support helps pupils to close any gaps in their knowledge of sounds. More pupils are becoming fluent readers by the time that they leave Year 1.

The school caters well for pupils' personal development. Pupils have a secure knowledge of how to look after their own mental and physical health. They know how to keep themselves safe, including when using the internet. They engage with charitable efforts such as food bank donations and shoe box appeals. Pupils develop a strong appreciation for the different backgrounds of others. They told inspectors how much they value the opportunities to learn from their classmates about their respective beliefs and customs. Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.

Pupils have not let the changes to their learning environment affect their behaviour nor their adherence to classroom routines. Children in the early years quickly learn the school's expectations and rise to them. They get off to a positive start. Pupils in all classes demonstrated exceptional levels of conduct during lessons and throughout the school day. Pupils love to learn and are extremely attentive in their lessons. Inspectors saw no disruptions to learning.

Pupils' attendance rates are not as high as the school would like them to be. Nonetheless, the school takes sufficient action to make sure that attendance remains a high priority for everyone.

The school is considerate of staff's workload. Staff are particularly appreciative of the school's recent actions to help them to manage the additional challenges presented by the move to temporary buildings.

Trustees and others who are responsible for governance generally fulfil their duties effectively. However, their oversight of some safeguarding procedures is not as sharp as it could be.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff know how to recognise the signs that suggest a pupil might be at risk. The school takes sufficient action to manage these concerns. However, the school, and those responsible for governance, do not have robust oversight of the school's work to keep children safe. This means that some minor weaknesses in record keeping, including compliance checking, are not consistently identified and addressed.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, curriculums are not as well designed as well as they could be. Some curriculum content is therefore not taught in a coherent, logical way. In these subjects, pupils do not build a rich body of knowledge. The school should review the design of these subject curriculums and how it expects them to be implemented by staff.
- In some subjects, the school does not have strong oversight of how well curriculums are being delivered. This occasionally means that the school does not act swiftly to address some deficiencies in the design and implementation of these subject curriculums. The school should develop its approach to evaluating the quality and effectiveness of the curriculum in these subjects.
- Trustees, including those responsible for governance, do not sufficiently assure themselves that records and procedures related to safeguarding are as robust as they should be. This means that they have not identified some minor weaknesses in some procedures and are not alert to some patterns and trends in these areas. Trustees and governors should review how they oversee these aspects of the school's work to maintain an effective safeguarding culture.

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](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	138957
Local authority	Bolton
Inspection number	10240562
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	567
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Phillip Mason
Principal	Katie Jones
Website	www.sssj.bolton.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	10 and 11 November 2021, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school building was extensively damaged in August 2023. Pupils spent the early part of this academic year in multiple, temporary settings. The trust has since created a temporary school campus on the original school site which all pupils are now attending. The development of a new school building is underway.
- This school is part of the Vantage CE Academies Trust.
- A new CEO has been appointed this academic year.
- Leaders do not make use of alternative provision.
- There is a before-school club at the school, which the trust oversees.
- The school is a Church of England primary school. The most recent section 48 inspection of the school's religious character took place in February 2017. The school is awaiting confirmation from the diocese about its next section 48 inspection.

Information about this inspection

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

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspectors conducted deep dives in these subjects: early reading, geography, science, history and mathematics. They met with subject leaders and teachers. They visited lessons, looked at examples of pupils' work and talked with groups of pupils about their learning. The lead inspector observed pupils read to a familiar adult.
- The inspectors also considered the curriculum, spoke with pupils about their learning and evaluated their work in some other subjects.
- The lead inspector spoke with a member of the local governing board and a group of trustees. He also spoke with the CEO.
- The inspectors talked to staff about their workload and well-being.
- The lead inspector spoke with a representative of the local authority and the diocese.
- The inspectors met with the leaders who are responsible for attendance, behaviour and pupils' personal development.
- The inspectors spoke with pupils about their wider experience of school.
- The inspectors looked at a range of policies and documents related to pupils' welfare and education. They observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- The inspectors took account of the responses to Ofsted's online surveys for staff. There were no responses to the online survey for pupils.
- The inspectors spoke to parents at the start of the school day and took account of the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text responses.

Inspection team

David Spruce, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Chris Metcalfe	Ofsted Inspector
Lindy Griffiths	Ofsted Inspector
Ros Munro	Ofsted Inspector

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