



St Simon's Catholic Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 106127
Local Authority Stockport
Inspection number 287423
Inspection date 9 November 2006
Reporting inspector Judith Clarke

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary	School address	Bosden Avenue
School category	Voluntary aided		Hazel Grove, Stockport
Age range of pupils	3–11		Cheshire SK7 4LH
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0161 4839696
Number on roll (school)	187	Fax number	0161 4832569
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr P Horton
		Headteacher	Mrs Elizabeth Inman
Date of previous school inspection	1 October 2001		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

The school is smaller than the average sized primary school. Most of the pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average as is the proportion of pupils with statements of their special educational need. The school has the ICT Quality Mark, the Basic Skills Quality Mark and Silver Level Eco school award.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school, where pupils work exceptionally hard and make outstanding progress. Parents applaud the way the school cares for and guides their children. They recognise that their children are given many opportunities to be proud of their own achievements. Pupils make exceptional progress because the headteacher and staff continually strive to improve all the school offers, so fulfilling the school's mission statement. Achievement is outstanding. When children start school in the Nursery class their attainment is broadly average. They get off to a very good start to their schooling and make exceptional progress because of high quality teaching. They feel safe and secure and enjoy their learning experiences. The pupils continue to make outstanding progress throughout the school and by the end of Year 6 standards are exceptionally high in English, mathematics and science. This is because of the drive and determination of the headteacher in ensuring that all staff focus upon both the pupils' academic achievement and their personal well-being. The headteacher, ably assisted by the deputy headteacher and subject coordinators, is rigorous in analysing and evaluating the work of the school. There is a well established pattern of monitoring and review which ensures that identified areas for improvement are acted upon swiftly. This accurate and detailed self-evaluation drives the school forward and underpins the exceptional progress the pupils make. All subject coordinators know exactly where improvements need to be made and work diligently to secure them. As a result the quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. This is demonstrated by the successful drive in all lessons to pitch the pupils learning at the correct level, so that the teachers and teaching assistants focus exactly on what it is that they want pupils to learn. In this way the needs of all the pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and higher attaining pupils, are fully met. Teachers use interactive whiteboards exceptionally well in lessons to stimulate pupils' interest and ensure that lessons are visually exciting. Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning are excellent. They work extremely hard and are determined to do very well. For example, some pupils spoke about their enjoyment of solving problems in mathematics and how it made them think hard as they persevered with their work. They also demonstrate impressive levels of responsibility. The older pupils have a raft of tasks which they take great pride in fulfilling. Opportunities to act as playground pals, class representatives to the school council, play leaders and the special friends for the Reception children all result in pupils who are confident, relaxed and readily accept responsibilities. Pupils are very clear about their learning. They know exactly what it is they need to do next to improve and work diligently to that end. They often work in groups and teams and develop impressive skills in organisation, but have less opportunity to support each other in their learning by talking through problems to improve their work. An outstanding curriculum engages the pupils interests and ensures that they are active and busy learners. Pupils are very aware of the need to be fit, eat healthily and keep safe. The sports coaches who work with the pupils at lunchtime provide valuable activities which promote the development of different sporting skills. Information and communication technology is used exceptionally well by all the staff to promote learning in many subject areas. The pupils are given outstanding preparation

for future learning as they acquire exceptionally strong basic skills in English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology. The outstanding care and support the pupils receive ensures that all feel safe and secure in school. The pupils know that if they are anxious or troubled they can put their concerns into the class 'worry box' and they will be dealt with sympathetically and sensitively. The school has a very wide range of strategies in place to ensure the pupils feel valued and included into all it has to offer. This is demonstrated clearly at playtimes when all play together happily and no one is left on their own.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure the pupils have opportunities to help each other with their learning and so have even more chances to be independent and responsible for themselves and others.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Achievement is outstanding. When children enter the Nursery class their attainment is at the level expected of children of their age. The spread of attainment is wide. Pupils make exceptional progress throughout the school, this is because teaching is outstanding and the pupils work very hard and want to learn. As a result, by the end of Year 6 standards are exceptionally high. More than half of the pupils achieve at the higher than expected levels because consistently strong teaching is targeted at exactly what the pupils need to learn. A particularly strong feature of the pupils achievements is their writing. The school has had a significant drive to improve writing throughout the school especially for the boys. This has paid off, resulting in exceptional improvement in writing standards, which now matches those in other areas. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are exceptionally well supported in class and so they too make excellent progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The pupils' personal development and well-being is outstanding. Their enjoyment in all the school has to offer is clearly demonstrated in their above average attendance. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is also outstanding. They are confident and active members of the school community, willingly accepting the responsibilities they are given and trust placed in them. For example, the school council wrote to the governors expressing their concern about the way that parents parked their cars, as a result of this and further deliberations the parking system at the school has been altered. The pupils are concerned for those beyond the school, fund raising for those who are not as fortunate as themselves. They play an active role in the parish and local community and show an increasing understanding of their home town. The school has strong links with an orphanage in Uganda and pupils are active, for example, in considering issues with regard to Fair Trade. As a result of work towards Eco school

status they demonstrate an excellent understanding of conservation issues. Pupils' excellent academic, personal and social skills ensure that they are well prepared for the future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

High quality teaching throughout the school ensures that pupils make exceptional progress. Key features of all lessons are the very strong relationships between staff and pupils, which underpin learning well. Teachers have high expectations of their pupils and in response they work very hard indeed. Lessons are stimulating and engage pupils of all abilities very effectively: interactive whiteboards are used exceptionally well, to this end. High quality support from the designated teaching assistants in each class makes a particularly strong contribution to the excellent progress made by all pupils. Assessment is very thorough. Pupils have clear and appropriately challenging targets to work towards. They know exactly what it is they need to do to improve further. Pupils often work in groups and teams and show impressive skills in organisation and independence. However, they have fewer opportunities to help each other improve their work by talking through their difficulties.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is very well designed to engage the interests of all pupils, challenge them effectively and meet their academic and personal needs. Information and communication technology is a strength and plays an important part in supporting all curriculum areas. It has been particularly valuable in promoting and developing writing. Key to the strength of the provision in writing is the relevance of the tasks the teachers set, which result in pupils achieving exceptionally high standards. The boys in particular have been encouraged to do well, through ingenious use of different topics which have fired their enthusiasm. For example, the pupils organised a World Cup event, organising matches, ensuring referees and linesmen were appointed, filming the action and writing up reports. This not only engaged their interests but also drew on their skills of diplomacy and organisation. Enrichment of the curriculum is excellent. All pupils have opportunities to attend a wide range of after school activities. The Year 6 pupils look forward to their annual residential experience, reflecting that although some of the activities mean they get very wet or have to struggle, the sense of achievement when they succeed is profound. In Years 3 to 6 the pupils have the opportunity to learn Italian: these lessons provide a useful insight to the culture and life of a different European country.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The strongly inclusive nature of the school and the willingness of all staff to support the pupils are strengths greatly valued by parents. There are appropriate procedures in place for safe staff recruitment, child protection and health and safety. Systems for monitoring personal and academic development are very well established and extremely rigorous. Pupils are very clear about their targets for improvement and know that staff give them very good help in their learning. The school's thorough tracking systems are used to ensure the most appropriate allocation of resources, in order to enable pupils to make the best possible progress. Exceptional links with outside agencies allow the school to have access to the best possible advice and support for the benefit of all. Links with the Nursery and Reception classes are seamless and allow the children make a secure transition to Year 1. Contacts with the different high schools the pupils transfer to are also exceptionally good.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The leadership and management of the school are outstanding. The headteacher, ably supported by the deputy headteacher and subject coordinators, demonstrates a determination for continuing improvement. There is absolutely no complacency in this school. This results in a common sense of purpose and drive. Team work and a shared vision are exceptionally strong. Teaching assistants have a very clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities and all know they are valued. The commitment to continuing professional development is a strength. The headteacher and subject leaders have a very clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement, derived from very thorough and accurate self review. Detailed and comprehensive strategies have ensured improvements in teaching and learning and standards in writing, whilst maintaining strengths in other aspects of the work of the school. This has been key to the outstanding way the school has moved forward and demonstrates the excellent capacity it has to improve further. The governing body has undoubted strengths. Governors use their wide range of talents and areas of expertise to good effect in support of the school's development. They understand its strengths and areas for development well. Resources are used exceptionally well in the school to support learning: achievement is exceptionally high and so the school gives outstanding value for money.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for being so polite and friendly when I visited your school. I really enjoyed talking to you about your work and meeting the class representatives. I think that you go to an excellent school.

Here are some things that I thought were really good about your school and also some things that you told me you liked particularly:

- the way you all behave so well, enjoy your lessons and work hard
- the way the headteacher and all the staff work so hard to make sure you do as well as you can
- your parents think your school looks after you very well and makes sure you are able to do your best
- the way you enjoy working with the sports coaches, visiting places of interest and learning Italian.

In an excellent school it is really important that you all keep up the hard work so that you continue to be outstanding. I have asked your teachers to think of some ways that you can help each other when you have problems with your work.

I wish you all well for the future.