

SS Simon and Jude CofE Primary School, Bolton

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105213
Local Authority	Bolton
Inspection number	308798
Inspection dates	3–4 April 2008
Reporting inspector	Stephen Wall

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	5–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	350
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	
Headteacher	Mr Simon Bramwell
Date of previous school inspection	3 April 2008
School address	Newport Road Great Lever Bolton BL3 2DT
Telephone number	01204 333583
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Age group	5–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a larger than average primary school serving an area of challenging social and economic circumstances. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is well above average. Nearly half the pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds and the largest group is Asian Pakistani. Most of these have Urdu as their first language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those with statements of special educational need, is average. An acting headteacher was in post from January 2007. A permanent headteacher has been in post since 31 March 2008.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

In accordance with section 13(3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector (HMCI) is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. Improvement since the last inspection has been inadequate. The school gives inadequate value for money.

For a number of years, the school has experienced many changes of staff. There has been a succession of supply teachers, especially in Key Stage 2, whose quality and impact on learning has not been rigorously monitored. The disruption to pupils' learning has been severe. It has led to a steep decline in standards and to inadequate achievement. The situation has been compounded by significant changes to the school's leadership. These factors have deprived the school of its confidence and its sense of purpose. Many parents understandably express concern at the disruption to their children's education. The acting headteacher tried hard to tackle declining standards by improving procedures for monitoring the school's effectiveness. With the support of the local authority, the school has now identified accurately what it needs to do to improve. However, tackling these challenges is at a very early stage. Leaders and managers cannot yet show positive impact. Capacity to improve is, therefore, uncertain and consequently inadequate.

The steep decline in the school's performance is marked by the exceptionally low standards in the 2007 tests at the end of Key Stage 2 in English, mathematics and science. Pupils' progress across Key Stage 2 is inadequate. Although there has been some recent improvement in teaching, its quality remains inadequate overall because it is not consistently strong enough to overcome the legacy of underachievement. Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are often unrealistic and are not founded on the rigorous use of assessment information to cater for pupils' needs and differing abilities accurately or effectively.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are satisfactory. Pupils get on well together and most are polite and welcoming. Their behaviour is satisfactory. They show respect for adults. The satisfactory curriculum offers a wide range of enrichment activities which make a significant contribution to pupils' enjoyment. The overall quality of care, guidance and support for pupils is inadequate largely because of the shortcomings in tracking pupils' progress to identify individual needs and to tackle underachievement effectively.

Despite recent support from the local authority, leadership and management are inadequate. Roles and responsibilities of leaders at all levels are insufficiently developed and are not focused on ensuring that pupils achieve as well as they should. There has been little analysis of how teaching influences pupils' progress. The very recent appointment of a permanent, experienced headteacher gives grounds for optimism. He has brought clarity of vision and his main priority is, correctly, to make sure that the whole school focuses intensely on raising pupils' standards and achievement. However, he has not been in post long enough for his actions to show impact. Governance has been inadequate in holding the school rigorously enough to account for its standards for many years. The recently appointed Chair of Governors is determined to remedy the situation.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The Foundation Stage provision is good. It is well managed and led by an experienced and knowledgeable coordinator. Children's attainment on entry is well below that normally expected for their age. They thrive on good teaching and a rich diet of interesting and exciting things to do, including visits to local places of interest. These help overcome barriers to learning and encourage positive attitudes. As a consequence, children make good progress. Although standards by the end of Reception for most children are below those recommended nationally, this represents good achievement from their starting points. Progress is carefully monitored and results analysed. This allows the teachers to identify the next steps in learning and match work to individual children's needs. Children are encouraged to develop positive relationships and respect for others within the class. They are introduced to the importance of healthy lifestyles and the importance of personal safety. Achievement is celebrated through high quality displays as well as positive encouragement. Parents are welcomed into the Foundation Stage and good quality relationships are evident. An effective induction programme makes sure that children settle in quickly to new routines. Information on children's progress is shared with parents. Families are encouraged to participate in their child's learning at every opportunity. Resources are managed effectively. However, outdoor facilities are underdeveloped. They do not provide children with sufficient opportunities for physical development or learning through play.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and improve pupils' achievement in English, mathematics and science, particularly in Years 3 to 6.
- Improve the quality and consistency of teaching and learning, particularly teachers' use of assessment information to cater for pupils of all abilities.
- Ensure that teachers track pupils' progress rigorously to identify individual needs and eradicate underachievement.
- Make sure that leaders and managers at all levels focus robustly and successfully on improving the quality of teaching and raising standards and achievement.
- Ensure that the governing body holds the school rigorously to account for its standards.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

Children enter Reception with skills well below those normally expected for their age. They make good progress because of good, stimulating teaching. The rate of progress slows in Years 1 and 2 where achievement is satisfactory in response to satisfactory teaching. By the end of Year 2 standards in reading, writing and mathematics are below average. In Key Stage 2 progress is inadequate because of the disruption to teaching in many classes and the inconsistent quality of teaching overall. Standards in English, mathematics and science were exceptionally low in the 2007 national tests at the end of Year 6. The statutory targets set for pupils' performance were missed by a wide margin. Analysis of the school's predictions and of pupils' work indicates that standards in the current Year 6 are also very low. The school has not tracked pupils' performance rigorously to identify and tackle levels of severe underachievement. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those from different ethnic backgrounds make similar progress to their peers in their year groups.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils feel safe in school. Their behaviour is satisfactory in lessons and around school. Pupils know the importance of treating others with tolerance and respect. This is especially evident in the harmonious relations between different ethnic groups. Older pupils take their responsibilities seriously. The members of the school council value its recent creation and are confident that the council will allow important issues to be discussed. They are particularly keen to improve the 'run- down' play areas and 'tidy the place up so that is a better place to work in'. Pupils enjoy school. Although attendance is below the national average, it is improving because the school is tackling it effectively. For example, very effective relations have been forged with the local authority's social workers to support children with poor records of attendance. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Assemblies are used effectively and provide time for pupils to reflect on what has been discussed. Displays promote the importance of respecting other cultures. Pupils understand how important healthy lifestyles are. Older pupils say they know how important healthy eating is but many persist with bringing unhealthy foods into school. Very low standards and achievement in basic skills mean that pupils' preparation to take full advantage of the next steps in their education is poor.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 4

The quality of teaching is inadequate. Teaching and learning are good in Reception and satisfactory in Years 1 and 2. In Years 3 to 6 the quality of teaching is inadequate and is not consistently good enough overall to counter the levels of persistent underachievement which have built up over a number of years. Even though there is much to be improved, there is some teaching which is good in Years 1 to 6. In these lessons learning is conducted at a good pace and there is a good variety of activities to keep pupils interested and motivated. As a result, pupils enjoy their learning and respond eagerly. However, the amount of good teaching is overshadowed by inadequate teaching which fails to engage pupils fully in their learning because it lacks variety and dynamism. Lessons are conducted at too leisurely a pace. Tasks are not targeted specifically at pupils' differing levels of ability with the result that they either find the work too easy or impossibly difficult. Teachers concentrate too heavily on teaching rather than on the quality of pupils' learning. As a result, they tend to talk for too long and expect pupils to be attentive way after their concentration span has been exhausted. Teachers mark pupils' written work regularly and conscientiously. However, the quality of their comments is not consistently useful in helping pupils understand what they need to do to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school provides a satisfactory subject-based curriculum. It meets statutory requirements. The Foundation Stage curriculum is especially rich and imaginative enabling children to make good progress and develop positive attitudes. The development of pupils' information and communication technology skills is satisfactory. The school provides a large number of extra-curricular activities including a well established Breakfast Club. These activities are popular with pupils and they add significantly to their enjoyment of school. The school has positive links with its local churches and uses visiting speakers from the local community effectively.

Regular school visits and a residential weekend for the older pupils enrich the curriculum and help broaden pupils' horizons. Visits are used well by staff to forge links between pupils' first-hand experiences and the learning environment in the school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 4

Care, guidance and support are inadequate because the school's procedures for monitoring, guiding and supporting pupils' academic progress are not effective enough. Pupils do not know how well they are doing and are unclear about what they need to do to improve their work. Although the school is aware of pupils' attainment in reading, writing, mathematics and science, it does not use this information systematically to match teaching to pupils' needs or to track their progress well enough and tackle underachievement. Care for pupils' welfare and safety is satisfactory. Arrangements for child protection are in place and regularly reviewed. Procedures to promote health and safety are also in place. Support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who speak English as a second language is satisfactory. The school has established effective working relations with outside agencies to support vulnerable children. The school does all it can to liaise effectively with secondary schools to ease pupils' transition.

Leadership and management

Grade: 4

The quality and effectiveness of leadership and management have declined since the last inspection. They are inadequate because the school has failed to successfully tackle a serious drop in standards, achievement and the quality of teaching and learning. The recent appointment of a permanent headteacher has improved staff morale and is giving the school new impetus. Intensive support from the local authority has helped the school identify what it needs to do to make the school more effective. Procedures for self-evaluation have been put into place and priorities for improvement have been identified. The school's development plan is of appropriate quality with measurable objectives and realistic timescales to bring about improvement. While this points the way forward for the school, it is too early for any positive impact on standards and achievement to have taken place. Monitoring the quality of pupils' work and the quality of teaching and learning has started. It involves subject managers who are keen to see their roles further defined and developed. However, the monitoring lacks rigour and is insufficiently focused on improving standards and achievement.

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Annex A

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?	4
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	4

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	4

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
How well learners enjoy their education	3
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	3
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	4

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	4
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	4

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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	4
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	4
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	4
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	4
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	4
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	4
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	4
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	Yes
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Inspection of SS Simon and Jude Church of England Primary School, Bolton, Bolton, BL3 2DT

Thank you very much for the welcome and help you gave to the inspectors when we came to your school recently. We liked how you talked to us in such a friendly way. I would like to share with you what we thought about your school.

We think you get on very well together. You are welcoming to visitors and show good levels of respect for the adults working with you. We were pleased to hear how much you enjoy all the extra activities the school puts on for you. These help you enjoy school. The Reception class is very successful because there are lots of exciting things for the youngest children to do. The school works well in partnerships with others to help improve your learning.

We are asking the school to do the following things to make sure that you get the best out of your time at school.

- Help you to make much better progress and reach higher standards in English, mathematics and science, especially in the Key Stage 2 classes.
- Improve lessons to make sure the work that is set for you is not too easy or too difficult.
- Keep a much closer check on the progress you make to help you do as well as you can in your work.
- Make sure that school leaders and managers are successful in raising standards and achievement further.
- Make sure that the school's governing body keeps a close eye on the work of the school.

Our judgement is that your school requires 'special measures'. This means that inspectors will continue to visit school regularly and there will be extra assistance to help it improve.

I am sure you will work hard and do your best to help your teachers bring about the improvements we think are necessary.