

Ss Simon and Jude CofE Primary School, Bolton

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105213
Local Authority	Bolton
Inspection number	335392
Inspection dates	25–26 November 2009
Reporting inspector	Linda Murphy

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills (HMCI) the authority to cause any school to be inspected. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	5–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	350
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Ned Solanki
Headteacher	Mr Simon Bramwell
Date of previous school inspection	3 April 2008
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Introduction

When SS Simon and Jude CofE Primary School was inspected in April 2008, it was judged to require special measures. Since the autumn term 2008, the school has received termly monitoring inspections by additional inspectors to check the progress made in addressing the issues identified below.

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 17 lessons or part-lessons and held meetings with governors, staff, groups of pupils, and a representative of the local authority. They observed the school's work, and looked at the school's data records, policies, safeguarding records, minutes of governing body meetings, notes of the School Improvement Partner's visits and details of a local authority review. Eighty one returned parental questionnaires were received and analysed.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- standards and achievement in English, mathematics and science, particularly in Years 3–4
- the quality and consistency of teaching and learning, particularly teachers' use of assessment information to cater for pupils of all abilities
- the way in which teachers track pupils' progress to identify individual needs and eradicate underachievement
- the focus of leaders and managers at all levels on improving the quality of teaching and raising standards and achievement
- the way that the governing body holds the school to account for its standards.

Information about the school

The school is larger than most primary schools. It serves pupils from a range of ethnic backgrounds: the larger groups represented are White British and Pakistani. An increasing number of pupils are joining the school from Eastern Europe: some have not previously attended school. Twenty per cent of pupils are at an early stage of learning English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is average. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is above average. The school's Early Years Foundation Stage provides up to 60 places in a Reception Year unit, although currently, 48 children are on roll. There have been many changes in staffing since the last inspection including the appointment of a new headteacher. The school is part of the Greater Manchester City Challenge.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

In accordance with section 14 (14) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

Good leadership at all levels has ensured that since the last inspection the school has made good progress in addressing its weaknesses. As a result, it provides a good education for its pupils. The quality of care guidance and support is outstanding.

Very effective teaching and learning hasten the progress of all groups of pupils and this is addressing the legacy of underachievement. Standards are rising. In 2009, by the end of Year 6, pupils attained a broadly average level in English, mathematics and science. Standards are very similar for the present Year 6 enabling a much improved pathway of success. Assessments by the end of Key Stage 1 are low in reading, writing and mathematics. This group has not benefited from the good and improving provision in the Reception class and were particularly adversely affected by staff absence. Standards in mathematics at Key Stage 1 and writing across the school are the weakest areas in the school. Most importantly, progress is good for all groups particularly in speaking, listening, reading and at Key Stage 2 in calculation.

The school is very caring towards its pupils and families reflecting its very positive ethos. As a result, pupils enjoy school, develop a good understanding of health and safety, and behave well; parents comment upon all of these aspects very favourably. Pupils contribute very well to their class and school communities, although their understanding of communities further afield is underdeveloped. The basic curriculum meets pupils' needs but is at an early stage in enhancing pupils' interests and enjoyment. Pupils say they prefer practical activities and finding things out for themselves, as seen in their very good attendance of extra-curricular opportunities which broaden their skills and knowledge. Such opportunities are not sufficiently part of everyday learning. Very effective self-evaluation and stringent monitoring has led to good improvements since the last inspection. Most aspects of school life have improved well. The school is sure of its strengths and areas to develop and is firmly led by an ambitious and very well organised senior leadership team and a supportive yet increasingly challenging governing body. As a result, SS Simon and Jude has a good capacity to continue to improve.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards in mathematics at Key Stage 1 and writing across the school
- by:

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- improving pupils' skills of calculation in the Reception Year through to Year 2
- providing plentiful opportunities for pupils to write for a variety of reasons and audiences.
- Improve the effectiveness of the curriculum by:
 - implementing an approach that builds on pupils' interests
 - providing plentiful opportunities for practical work so that pupils apply their learning to new situations
 - using methods of research to build on pupils' independence in learning
 - enhancing pupils' understanding of the diversity of communities in the United Kingdom and beyond.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

Pupils' attainment is below that typically expected for their age on entry to Year 1. Low standards in Year 2 are being addressed systematically and already rapid strides have been made in speaking and listening, which is helping to underpin pupils' overall learning. Pupils also make good progress in reading because extra teaching is supported by parental help. The trend in standards by the end of Year 6 is changing. Historically pupils' attainment has been low but there is a clear trend of improvement. In 2009, standards rose to a broadly average level and there they remain for the present Year 6. Pupils made rapid gains in all tested subjects from the low levels when they joined Year 3. Within the broadly average band, standards are weakest in writing and, at Key Stage 1, in calculation. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those at an early stage of learning English as an additional language make the same progress as their classmates because of the well targeted support they receive.

Pupils' joy in learning shines through the day as indicated by their much improved attendance. Pupils achieve a healthy balance between co-operative learning methods and being confident to complete individual work. For example, they skilfully worked in groups in Year 4 to invent a game during a lesson in physical education; in Year 3, pupils made good use of 'solo thinking time' to prepare to share their views on Advent. They take on responsibility with great eagerness: this is equally true for all groups of learners including those most vulnerable who gain in confidence because of the support they receive and the friendly approach of others. Pupils take great pride in their work and present it neatly. They are persistent and tackle learning with energy. Pupils' good behaviour impacts well on learning so no time is lost. These aspects have improved noticeably since the previous inspection.

Pupils keenly adopt healthy lifestyles and make a very good contribution to their school community, for example, as prefects and school councillors. Their understanding about the culturally, socially and economically diverse communities in Britain and beyond is underdeveloped.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

A key to the successful teaching is the very effective direction from senior leaders and the strong relationships which underpin learning. Good subject knowledge means that questioning is very effective and requires pupils to think deeply about the subject-matter. Pupils are given many opportunities to be involved in paired and group work and to act as a learning resource for each other. Teaching assistants are actively involved in supporting learning and as a result, many pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those learning English as an additional language participate fully in lessons and make contributions with increasing confidence. The use of assessment and marking are generally good. In the best teaching, time is set aside for pupils to respond to the written comments they receive. On occasions, the use of practical resources to develop pupils' understanding is limited, the challenge is not well matched to pupils' needs and the pace is a little too rapid.

Pupils thrive on the practical activities because as they say they like to tease out problems and work together. This is why they participate to a huge extent in the extra-curricular opportunities the school provides. Pupils would like more opportunities to learn in this way. The day-to-day curriculum ensures a balance of basics. These are at times taught in isolation which discourages the using and applying of developing skills. Dovetailing with the school's very clear focus on raising standards, time is also set aside for activities such as visitors and visits including a residential experience for older

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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pupils.

The outstanding provision for care, guidance and support makes a major contribution to the academic and personal development of all pupils. Excellent health and safety systems including those for child protection ensure that pupils' well-being is paramount. The school is very responsive to nurturing pupils' individual needs. The learning mentor has a very important role in working with families and individuals to ensure good attendance. This has meant that attendance has risen from below average to above average. Together with the special needs leader and other senior staff, pupils gain the extra support they need. Good links with external agencies support the needs of individuals well. The breakfast club helps those who attend have a good start to the day.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

Ambition tempered with reality ensures that the senior leadership team set achievable goals and a clear timeframe to attain them. Through this approach, for example, the school has improved the quality of teaching. The school is no longer totally reliant upon one person, but rather leadership is delegated and stringently monitored. It is firmly embedded and sustainable. Strategic planning and its implementation are strengths which serve the school well. Staff morale is high because of the way all stakeholders' views are taken into account. There is a shared vision of how the school is to develop, and staff contribute well to decision making. One member of staff summed up the views of many in saying, 'we are not a lone voice', and that fundamental to the school's success is, 'consultation and strong leadership'. Work supported through the Greater Manchester City Challenge supports this well. Equal opportunities are embedded in the school's ethos: discrimination is not tolerated.

Leaders develop and sustain good partnerships with external agencies which add much to the quality of pupils' care and their rate of progress. For example, the music service is aiding pupils' rapid progress in singing and instrumental playing. An easy to use yet detailed system of tracking pupils' attainment comes into its own when teachers are held to account for the progress of pupils in their class. A harmonious atmosphere pervades the school with pupils from many different heritages working and playing together happily. These strengths have not yet been extended to developing pupils' understanding of communities globally.

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The governing body keeps itself up to date through professional development and provides good support and challenge to the school. This is a good improvement since the last inspection. Governors are well informed about the school's strengths and areas for development. They are forward-looking, for example, in the establishment of the outside provision for the Reception Year. Safeguarding procedures are faultless and exceed current requirements.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

On entry to the Reception Year children's attainment is generally well below that expected for their age and, in particular, in the use of language. They have a good start to their education and develop curiosity, confidence and basic skills well.

This is because of the:

- very positive relationships forged prior to the children starting. Staff visit families and the many varied settings from which children transfer
- excellent care given to all groups of children including those learning English as an additional language – this leads to racially harmonious learning
- daily use of assessment information to implement the next steps in learning
- enormous enjoyment children have in learning and the good range of inspiring resources and well-planned activities indoors and outside
- good support to developing children's language to underpin other learning – for example, a bilingual assistant is deployed well to support speaking and listening
- key workers have their own group of children to care for: excellent attention is

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given to hygiene and encouraging a healthy and happy lifestyle.

As a result, children make good progress and achieve well. Teaching has many strengths and the leader is well situated to model good practice. Even so, adults are at times under-deployed during whole-group teaching or when working outside. Despite children's good achievement, attainment is below that typically expected by the end of the Reception Year, particularly in writing and calculation. The teaching is very sensitive to children's needs and at the same time has high expectations of their knowledge, understanding and development of a wide range of skills. Children thrive on the attention they receive from this well staffed provision and enjoy exploring new activities. For example, they relished sitting in the sand outside and pretending they were at the seaside. They are equally happy multi-tasking as when they made patterns using information and communication technology whilst singing along to songs they overheard from the adjacent assembly. The curriculum is increasingly taking account of children's particular interests. The good quality of leadership and management ensures that very effective provision meets children's needs well.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

Parents and carers are very positive about the work of the school. A very small minority had some concerns about the way the school takes up parents' suggestions and how it meets the needs of individuals. Inspection evidence shows all these aspects to be good. Parents are particularly pleased with their children's progress and their enjoyment in learning, the way the school keeps them informed and the range of extra-curricular opportunities. The inspection team agree.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Parental questionnaires are not normally distributed for inspections conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005, unless inspectors have specific reasons to request that the school does so.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



26 November 2009

Dear Pupils

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

Thank you for welcoming the inspectors to SS Simon and Jude. When your school was inspected in April 2008, it was judged to require special measures. Since then, additional inspectors have regularly monitored the school's progress. I am pleased to be able to report to you that the school no longer requires special measures. Well done!

You and your families have played a big part in the improvements made. For example, your attendance has improved, you enjoy school, you work hard in lessons and you all get on very well together. You should be very proud of your contribution.

The headteacher, staff and governors have done well to make the school much better. They have rightly concentrated on improving teaching and learning. They have made sure, by checking your progress well, that the work in lessons is well matched to your abilities. As a result, standards and progress have improved. The governing body has done its job well and ensured that staff look after you exceptionally well.

The next steps for the school are to raise standards in mathematics at Key Stage 1 and writing across the school and to develop the curriculum. This is so that you have much more scope for practical work and investigations as well as learning more about the world beyond your school.

You can help by continuing to do your best and trying particularly hard to improve in mathematics and in writing.

I wish you well for the future.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Linda Murphy

Lead inspector

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