

St Simon's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106127
Local Authority	Stockport
Inspection number	336621
Inspection dates	5–6 November 2009
Reporting inspector	Denise Shields

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	184
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs A Gallogly
Headteacher	Mrs Elizabeth Inman
Date of previous school inspection	9 November 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 10 lessons and held meetings with governors, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work and scrutinised a range of documentation, including pupils' past and present work, assessment and tracking information, monitoring and evaluation records, and additional evidence of the support for vulnerable pupils. In addition, 87 parental questionnaires and a representative sample of questionnaires returned by pupils and staff were scrutinised.

- pupils' attainment and progress in mathematics in Years 3 to 6
- the quality of teaching, to determine whether pupils' progress is consistently good in all classes
- the rigour and use of assessment to promote learning and progress for all groups of pupils, in order to determine if they are reaching their potential
- the effectiveness of monitoring and evaluation by subject leaders, in order to drive improvement for all groups of pupils.

Information about the school

St Simon's Catholic Primary school is smaller than the average sized school. Most pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is below average and rising. Eligibility for free school meals is below average. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average and an above average proportion has a statement of their special educational need. There are more girls on roll than boys and, as a result, there is an unequal gender balance in some year groups. A Nursery and a Reception class form the school's Early Years Foundation Stage provision. The school has gained several awards including Healthy School status, Eco School silver, information and communication technology (ICT) Quality Mark and the Inclusion Quality Mark.

Since the previous inspection, with the exception of the headteacher and one part-time teacher, all teaching staff are new to the school.

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

St Simon's Catholic Primary is a good school with many outstanding features. The headteacher has managed the considerable changes in staff sensitively, but extremely well. She has established a strong team of staff and governors who share her commitment, enthusiasm and pursuit of excellence for the school. There is a clear, common vision for the future. Self-evaluation is thorough and accurate and, as a consequence, the correct priorities for improvement are identified and rigorously pursued. The impact of actions taken to tackle key priorities is robustly evaluated. This has a positive impact on outcomes for all groups of pupils. As a result the school demonstrates a good capacity for sustained improvement.

Children get a good start to their education in the Early Years Foundation Stage. They have a good range of activities to choose from indoors and this aids the development of their skills and knowledge in all aspects of the curriculum. However, the outdoor area is not in use continuously and this restricts the opportunities children have to choose to learn outside. Children start in the Nursery class with skills that are in line with those expected for their age. By the end of Year 6 their attainment is above average in English, mathematics and science and a higher proportion than average attain the higher levels. This demonstrates good achievement. Pupils' proficiency in basic skills, their exceptionally good personal and social skills and above average attendance prepares them well for the future.

St Simon's school is an extremely inclusive school where the promotion of community cohesion is outstanding. As a result relationships are very strong and pupils have an extremely good awareness of diversity in modern British society and in the wider world. They show a superb understanding of the need to respect people's differences, beliefs and values. Excellent partnerships with schools locally and internationally and with external agencies help to raise pupils' aspirations and the quality of their learning. Outstanding care, guidance and support ensure pupils feel very safe and happy.

Teaching is good and there are examples of outstanding practice. In lessons, the consistent use of a wide range of information and communication technology engages pupils' interest and they enjoy learning. As a result pupils make good progress. Secure and friendly relationships exist in all classes and pupils are not afraid to ask for help if they should need it. Although teachers' planning makes effective use of good quality assessment information to ensure that the needs of all groups of pupils are met assessment does not always make clear to pupils how much progress they have made in lessons or what steps they need to take to improve their learning.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make greater use of the Early Years Foundation Stage outdoor area by ensuring that:
 - it is used continuously each day
 - sufficient resources are available so that children can choose activities for themselves in all areas of learning.
- Ensure pupils know what progress they have made in their lessons and how to improve their work by:
 - providing time at the end of lessons for pupils to reflect on what they have learnt
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to evaluate their work, either by themselves or with a partner
 - ensuring that pupils' learning targets are individual to them and clearly inform them of the next steps to improve their learning
 - ensuring that marking consistently matches the quality of the best practice.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Pupils' behaviour is excellent. They are very well motivated, keen to help and support each other and to try their best at all times. This has a positive impact on pupils' achievement and their enjoyment of learning. In lessons, they thoroughly enjoy using the extensive range of information and communication technology. Many comment that it helps them to learn more rapidly. A group of older pupils expressed the view, 'The technology makes learning fun, it helps your thinking skills and gets you ready for when you go to your secondary school.' Learning and progress for all groups of pupils, as observed in lessons during the inspection, are good because of the consistently good teaching they receive. The progress of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is good because of the sensitive guidance they receive from the teaching assistants who help them. From average starting points when they enter the Nursery, all groups of pupils make good progress as they move through Key Stages 1 and 2, so that by the end of Year 6 their attainment is above average and achievement is good. A higher than average proportion of pupils attains the higher levels. By Year 6 attainment has been consistently above average in English and science. Accurate self-evaluation identified that attainment was not as good in mathematics. As a result of the robust and effective actions taken to tackle this, standards in mathematics are rising quickly, progress has speeded up and achievement is now good.

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is outstanding. Pupils respond very well to the Catholic ethos of the school. They reflect on relationships, celebrations and the world around them. Pupils consider ethical issues, like the environment and poverty, and can very confidently express their views on them. They make regular and well-informed contributions to charities across the globe. Reflection

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and consideration of others contributes very effectively to their mature attitudes to each other and their willingness to take on an extensive range of responsibilities to serve the school community. They are involved with work to protect the environment. To build knowledge and understanding across communities, pupils have very close links with schools locally and internationally where pupils have different social backgrounds, beliefs and traditions. This makes an outstanding contribution to community cohesion. Pupils have an impressive knowledge of how to live healthy and safe lifestyles.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	2
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	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

Consistently good quality teaching and careful and accurate assessment are key factors in pupils' good learning and progress. Teachers make good use of assessment information to target individuals and groups in danger of falling behind. Work is precisely matched to the needs and abilities of the different pupil groups. Lessons are lively and humour is often used to good effect. In the very best lessons pupils have plenty of chances to talk together in pairs. This promotes their speaking and listening skills very successfully, but it is not a consistent feature in all classes. Well targeted and

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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effective support is given to those who need extra help with their learning. In the very best practice, marking is helpful and provides constructive comments to help pupils improve, but this is not so in all classes. Not all teachers involve pupils in evaluating their own progress, for example, at the end of the lesson. Pupils have group learning targets, but these are often too vague and not individual enough to meet their needs. Consequently, many pupils say that they are not certain how to improve their work. The well planned curriculum is carefully adjusted to meet the requirements of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Pupils get many opportunities to practise their information and communication technology skills. For example, they regularly use programmes linked to literacy or numeracy and this has a positive impact on developing pupils' basic skills. The curriculum makes excellent provision for the personal, social and health education of pupils. The range of activities available beyond lessons is extensive, as is the breadth of the visits and visitors, many from abroad, who come to the school and add richness to pupils' learning.

Exceptionally high levels of care, guidance and support are present throughout the school. Special emphasis is placed on knowing all pupils individually. A typical view expressed by very many pupils is, 'There is always an adult who will listen, they are all kind and helpful and you feel very safe.' There is excellent support for individuals and vulnerable groups, which has led to impressive improvements in their learning and self-esteem. 'Special Friends' ensure that the youngest children are very well supported by Year 6 pupils when they start school. Overwhelmingly, pupils say how much they think this helped them to settle into school. Arrangements to help pupils move from year group to year group and then onto secondary school are very good.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher has managed the period of significant staff turbulence exceptionally well. With the support of knowledgeable governors, a new teaching team has been appointed. Team work is strong at all levels. The very high return of questionnaires from staff indicates they feel that they are valued members of the school community. A robust system to monitor and evaluate the work of the school is well established and used effectively by senior and middle leaders to drive improvements so that the high expectations set are achieved. The headteacher and deputy headteacher work extremely well together, they bring different but valuable strengths to the leadership

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and management of the school. The roles of subject leaders are developing well because staff readily undertake a good range of training in order to improve their expertise and they have a good understanding of standards in their subject areas. The effective governing body holds the school to account and governors are not afraid to ask challenging questions and monitor the quality of provision well. The school complies with current statutory requirements for safeguarding, health and safety and child protection.

The school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination extremely well. As a result the school is a very happy, harmonious community in which to work and learn. The numerous very positive views expressed by pupils and staff confirm this. Community cohesion is outstanding with many notable strengths, including partnerships with the community, parish and local and international schools. Excellent relationships are established with parents and they are fully involved in their children's learning and the life of the school. Members of the parish are very active within the school and provide caring support and guidance for all staff and pupils.

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	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

As a result of good teaching and learning, children make good progress. By the time they enter Year 1, the vast majority of children are working within the expected levels for their age and a small minority exceed them. The activities planned for indoors have a good balance between those children can choose for themselves and those led by an adult. The outdoor area is used at set times during each day, but the quality and range

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of resources is limited. Access is not continuously available and so children cannot choose for themselves if they want to learn outside. As a result this holds back children's independent learning and progress. Children are safe and well cared for and all welfare procedures are in place. Relationships are very good and children play happily together. The key worker system is effective and helps to establish close links with the children and their families. The leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage are good. Leaders have an accurate view of what to do next and good plans to develop the phase further.

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

Inspectors received questionnaire responses from approximately 47% of parents and carers. Analysis of responses indicates that overwhelmingly they feel the school is led and managed effectively, they are happy with their children's experience at school and their children enjoy school. They also express an extremely positive view that the school keeps their children safe and helps their children to have a healthy lifestyle. Inspectors endorse these views. Typically parents reported that:

'Although the school has been through a very difficult period the headteacher has never failed to put our children first—she has kept the school afloat!'

'Staff are always approachable—this encourages child/parent trust—teachers go above and beyond what is expected of them, and the standard of teaching is first class.'

'Our children feel safe and secure—problems are resolved quickly.'

While most felt the school took account of their suggestions and concerns, a few parents disagreed. However, inspectors found no evidence that the school did not regularly consult with parents and act, where appropriate, on suggestions made. Although a very few parents felt the school did not deal effectively with unacceptable behaviour, most expressed a positive view and inspectors endorse this.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Simon's Catholic Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 87 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 184 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	60	69	26	30	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	67	77	20	23	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	59	68	24	28	1	1	2	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	49	56	32	37	1	1	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	55	63	29	33	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	54	62	32	37	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	64	74	23	26	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	48	55	34	39	1	1	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	50	57	32	37	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	51	59	29	33	0	0	2	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	43	49	37	43	4	5	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	59	68	27	31	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	63	72	22	25	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

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.



9 November 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Simon's Catholic Primary School, Stockport SK7 4LH

Thank you for helping with the inspection of your school. You were very helpful, polite and friendly. We thoroughly enjoyed our short time with you. St Simon's Catholic Primary School is a good school and some aspects are outstanding. These are some of the things we found out.

- Adults take exceptionally good care of you and help you to stay safe and healthy. Your behaviour is excellent and you enjoy learning.
- Your teachers make lessons interesting and fun. You all make good progress and attain standards that are above average by the time you leave at the end of Year 6.
- Children in the Nursery and Reception classes have a good start to their education.
- The headteacher, deputy headteacher and all other staff work closely with the governors to carefully plan what needs to be improved.

Many of you told me that you were not sure how to improve your work and that teachers' marking is not always helpful. We have asked your teachers to look at ways to make your learning targets personal to you and easier for you to understand, and to ensure that when they mark your work their comments tell you how you can improve.

Children in the Nursery and Reception classes can choose lots of interesting activities to do inside but are not able to use the outside area very often. We have asked your teachers to ensure that the outside area can be used all the time and to provide more equipment to make it an exciting place to learn.

Yours sincerely

Denise Shields

Lead inspector

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