



## DENOMINATIONAL INSPECTION REPORT

Canonical Inspection under Canon 806 on behalf of the  
Archbishop of Southwark and Inspection of  
Denominational Education under Section 48  
of the Education Act 2005

**URN 141067**

**St Simon of England  
Catholic Primary School  
Noakes Meadow  
South Ashford Kent  
TN23 4RB**

**Inspection date: June 20 2017**

Chair of Governors:	Mrs J Hardy
Headteacher:	Mr P McCabe
Inspectors:	Mr DG Fox Mr R Tapley

### **EDUCATION COMMISSION**

St Edward's House, St Paul's Wood Hill, Orpington, Kent BR5 2SR  
Tel 01689 829331 Fax 01689 829255

**Director of Education: Dr Anne Bamford**

# SECTION 48

# Introduction

## Description of the school

St Simon of England Catholic Primary School is situated in the Canterbury Deanery of the Archdiocese of Southwark. It is an Academy and is part of the Kent Catholic Schools Partnership (KCSP). The principal parish it serves is St Simon Stock, Ashford. Pupils also come from St Theresa's, Ashford. The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholics is 57%. Overall, the weekly allocation of curriculum time to Religious Education is 10%. The school takes pupils from ages 4 – 11. Currently, there are 214 pupils on roll.

The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is broadly average. The attainment of pupils entering the school is below average. The school has a lower than national average number of pupils on the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) register. 47% of pupils have English as an Additional Language (EAL). The school receives Pupil Premium (PP) funding for 22% of the pupils. The majority of pupils are from white British heritage with 27% of pupils come from Eastern European countries.

### Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding	Grade 3	Requires improvement
Grade 2	Good	Grade 4	Inadequate

# Overall effectiveness of the school in providing Catholic Education

**GRADE**  
**1**

St Simon of England is an outstanding Catholic school. It is warm and welcoming with an ethos firmly rooted in the Gospel. Parents are very supportive of the school and one parent told inspectors that the “Catholic faith is central to the school.”

Pupils are happy and proud of the school. Through their learning and behaviour, they demonstrate an understanding of their role in ensuring the school is one where everybody is looked after and respected. Their behaviour is exemplary. Parents’ views are taken into account. The school has introduced a Parents Forum. Parents describe the school as a big family. They appreciate the impact of the school on their children. Parents are overwhelmingly appreciative of and grateful for the high quality education and high level of care children receive.

The governing body and the headteacher are committed to ensuring that the faith is the foundation of school life. Their leadership is effective in ensuring teaching delivers improvements in the standards of Religious Education. As a result, St Simon of England is a school with high expectations and excellent outcomes.

In the parish priests’ view, the “Gospel is alive and well” in the school.

## **What steps need to be taken to improve further?**

Governors, Headteacher and staff should:

- Build on the impressive progress of EAL pupils
- Develop further opportunities for independent work and self-reflection to build on the upward trend in standards of Religious Education
- Continue the excellent work on marking and feedback

## **The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life of the school**

The school mission statement, "Where every child matters as an image of God and a gift of love," sums up the purpose and vision of the school. It is a warm, inclusive school where the uniqueness of each individual is valued. Pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life of the school in many ways.

Relationships throughout the school are very positive and are based on mutual respect and an understanding of the call to serve the needs of others. Pupil behaviour is excellent. Pupils are proud of their contribution to the school through the School Council. They meet with the chair of governors every term to discuss issues involving pupils. They feel that they are listened to. Year 6 pupils act as buddies to younger pupils. They look after them and act as role models of good behaviour in the playground. There are the "Young Interpreters" who work with EAL pupils. Their impact has been shared with other schools within the local area. They recently presented their work to the whole school at assembly.

Prayer is an important part of school life. A pupil-led 'Faith and Reflection' group is appreciated by pupils. They gather together in mixed year groups to pray for their needs and the needs of the school and the community. They also discuss their faith and look at the week's "Wednesday Word." Pupils said that they would appreciate more opportunities for this type of prayer and reflection.

The school provides 'Rainbows' Support for children who may be troubled by bereavement or loss.

Pupils are aware of the challenges people face in the school and wider community. They understand the need to work for justice. An example of this is how they have welcomed children from Russia and Belarus who have visited the school and show compassion for them. Pupils have also fundraised for the charity which sponsors the visits.

## **How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education**

From below average levels of attainment on entry, pupils achieve well at the end of Key Stage 2. Progress in all key stages is good and appropriate to the age and ability of the pupils. Pupils show good knowledge and understanding during group discussions and they are very enthusiastic about discussing their religious experiences. They are keen to question and learn more. There is a high level of pupil engagement in lessons. Behaviour is excellent. The school invests, through training for staff, in ensuring that all pupils, particularly, the large amount of EAL pupils are supported in order to make similar levels of progress.

The quality of work in exercise books reflects the pride pupils have in their learning. It shows that pupils apply their learning to everyday life. All pupils make good progress, with some making outstanding progress. There were good examples of pupil self – assessment.

## **How well pupils respond to and participate in Collective Worship**

Pupils at St Simon of England are active in preparing and participating in acts of worship. During Collective Worship, pupils are at ease and act with integrity when praying both privately and with others. Though they know many traditional prayers and ways of praying, many pupils are also comfortable when asked to lead a spontaneous prayer in assemblies.

Prayer Leaders make significant contributions to acts of worship. Their leadership ensures that hymns and prayers are planned around the readings of the Mass. This group meet with the subject leader to plan liturgies and school Masses. They take responsibility for preparing bidding prayers, readings and choosing appropriate hymns. Pupils also run a weekly 'Faith and Reflection' group. They choose events that are happening in the world as a focus for prayer. Older pupils teach younger ones how to pray and help them understand the importance of praying for victims of suffering.

Pupils are reverent when attending Mass and know the importance of behaving appropriately at times during Collective Worship. The parish priest confirmed that pupils are actively involved in preparing acts of worship and that they participate with great reverence. Pupils from the school are altar servers in the parish and the school's choir occasionally sings at the parish Sunday Mass.

Publication Date 1st august 2017

**How well leaders, governors and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life of the school and plan and implement improvement to outcomes for pupils**

Leaders, governors and managers have a clear and shared vision and commitment to the Catholic identity and purpose of the school. They work effectively together to ensure that this shared vision and purpose remain the foundation for the Catholic life of the school. It is a prayerful and harmonious community in which the mission statement is lived and faith is central. A governor said that “it is not a case of fitting faith in.” Another added that the “bedrock of faith stays, whoever comes and goes.” The mission statement is central to all school policies.

Governors make sure they are informed of the school’s strengths and weaknesses through regular visits, joining lesson observations and participating in examination of pupils’ work. The headteacher leads by example and demonstrates his own personal faith through interactions with pupils, parents and staff. He is highly regarded within the school and the local community. Inspectors agreed that the “faith is genuine” within the community.

The Religious Education subject leader is knowledgeable and passionate about developing the spiritual and prayer life of the school. She believes that the knowledge and experience of God starts for many of the pupils once they enter the school and she endeavours to provide experiences which make pupils and their families engage with the faith community. Her impact, is evident in the impressive rise in the number of parents who join the school on their annual pilgrimage to Aylesford. One parent described the pilgrimage day experience as finding a “kind of inner peace.”

**How well leaders, governors and managers monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education and plan and implement for improvement to outcomes for pupils**

Leaders, governors and managers have a good understanding of their responsibility to ensure improvements in the standards of teaching and learning are maintained. They have responded to recruitment challenges wisely and successfully. Consequently, staffing is stable and staff are effective in delivering progress in standards and outcomes.

The Religious Education link governor, who is also the Chair of Governors, meets with the subject leader regularly and is fully informed of the strengths and areas for development. She ensures that the school clearly plans for and delivers progress. She attends progress meetings and contributes to whole school book looks.

Leaders, governors and managers have a clear understanding of groups of pupils who are not making sufficient progress. They have detailed plans to ensure the development of effective strategies. This is evident, for example, in the excellent progress of EAL pupils. During the inspection, governors were able to demonstrate a clear knowledge of levels of progress for all groups of pupils.

The Religious Education subject leader is an enthusiastic and knowledgeable role model and advocate for her subject. She has an effective and systematic programme for monitoring the provision and outcomes for all pupils. The school uses its tracking systems

and has built assessment modules into the programme of study to ensure that pupil attainment and progress are carefully measured and tracked.

The school's self-evaluation document is honest and reflects their determination to implement further strategies to deliver consistent improvements. The quality of teaching is monitored regularly through formal observations and lesson drop-ins, as well as the monitoring of pupils' books.

The Religious Education leader manages the subject budget successfully and buys new academic resources and artefacts as needed. She ensures that all staff, particularly those new to teaching in a Catholic school, are fully supported through targeted professional development and individual support. She encourages attendance at Diocesan and Deanery training and events as well as attending these herself. Her enthusiasm and faith commitment inspires all. She receives regular leadership time to monitor and develop her subject. Outcomes of observations and book looks are fed back to teachers individually and to the senior leadership team and governing body. Inspectors felt that she should be encouraged to promote more creative approaches to the teaching of Religious Education, such as giving higher ability pupils opportunities to participate in independent research and seek answers to big questions.

Publication Date 1st august 2017

**The quality of teaching and how purposeful learning is in Religious Education**

The quality of teaching observed was outstanding. Teachers were consistently highly effective in inspiring learning. In every lesson, pupils were supported and challenged. As a result, pupils made outstanding progress.

Lessons had a pace and structure that kept pupils involved and which inspired them to learn. The wide range of strategies ensured pupils were able to demonstrate their learning. Teachers plan effectively for the needs of all children, differentiating effectively as needed. As a result, pupils are encouraged and challenged to move their learning on. They respond with enthusiasm and there is a high level of engagement.

The school recognises that in classes where teachers are using developmental marking effectively, there is a positive impact on pupils' progress and attainment and their self-esteem. One pupil confidently said that "marking is now the best thing in the school." School leaders have introduced a policy which will embed this excellent practice throughout the school.

Pupils are confident in their knowledge and understanding of Religious Education and can clearly articulate what they have learnt. The school should now plan to use this to build on developing pupils' independence, for example, by introducing open-ended investigations as indicated in the "I Can" sheets.

**The extent to which the Religious Education curriculum promotes pupils' learning**

The school follows "The Way, The Truth and The Life" scheme as the main programme of study, supplementing as necessary. The requirements of the Religious Education Curriculum Directory are covered. The school meets the 10% requirement for curriculum time. Religious Education and the school mission to Catholic education are embedded through the whole of the school curriculum. It is adapted effectively in lessons. Consequently, pupils develop a sound knowledge and understanding of the Catholic faith.

The school has recently reviewed its 'Relationships and Sex Education' provision and is currently in the process of implementing the "Journey in Love" programme in all year groups.

The impact of the wider curriculum is seen in the excellent behaviour of pupils and in the way they respond to the concerns of others. Pupils are aware of people who suffer from injustice and poverty in the local and wider community. They regularly raise funds for charities chosen by the School Council.

**The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school**

Collective Worship is central to the life of the school and a key part of school celebration. Strong spiritual awareness is supported through daily prayer and reflection.

The Religious Education leader and parish priest ensure that the timetable for Collective Worship follows the liturgical calendar. Major feasts of the church are celebrated. Early years are included in the celebrations with the May procession and Crowning of Mary.



Class Masses are held for Key Stage 2 and all year groups go to the parish Church for 'Stations of the Cross' during Lent.

Parents and the parish community are invited to attend and take an active part in school based acts of worship. Parents confirmed that these were spiritual occasions which pupils enjoyed. The parish priest promotes school Masses and liturgies in the parish newsletter. As a result, parents and parishioners attend in increasing numbers.

The programme of study is enhanced through planned liturgies which are led by different classes throughout the year. For example, Year 5 lead the Remembrance Service in November. The school provides further enrichment with the annual school pilgrimage to Aylesford Priory and through participation in other events such as annual Deanery Celebration Mass held at St Anselm's Secondary School and KCSP Celebrations.

The sacrament of reconciliation is celebrated three times a year through a liturgy and individual meetings with the priest. While Catholic pupils partake in the full sacrament, those who are not Catholic often meet with the priest for a talk and blessing.

Publication Date 1st august 2017