



DIOCESE OF
SHREWSBURY

DENOMINATIONAL INSPECTION REPORT:

**THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL
AND RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

School: St Simon's Catholic Primary School
Address: Bosden Avenue
Hazel Grove
Stockport
Cheshire
SK7 4LH

Tel No: 0161 483 9696

URN: 106127

Headteacher: Mrs R Crisp

Chair of Governors: Mr P Coleing

Date of Inspection: 27 April 2022

Inspectors: Mrs C Morgan
Mr K Toms

ST SIMON'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL MISSION STATEMENT



“Whatever you do, do it for the glory of God”

1 Corinthians 10:31

SCHOOL: St Simon's Catholic Primary School, Hazel Grove

DATE OF LAST INSPECTION: 27 November 2015

JUDGEMENT FROM PREVIOUS INSPECTION: Outstanding

AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT FROM PREVIOUS INSPECTION

There were no areas for development identified in the monitoring inspection in 2015.

However, the school itself identified the following areas for its improvement:

- To implement a programme of child-led Collective Worship which further enhances pupils' spiritual awareness and understanding
- To provide opportunities for pupils to develop their spiritual well-being
- To embed the whole school STRIVE curriculum

PROGRESS MADE WITH AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT FROM THE PREVIOUS INSPECTION

St Simon's has in place a programme of Prayer and Liturgical Prayer throughout the school year, led by different groups of pupils. During the pandemic, much of this was shared online with families, who were invited to participate from their own homes.

Pupils are offered many varied and interactive opportunities to develop their spiritual well-being.

The STRIVE curriculum is well known and understood by the pupils.

Regular reviews of policies and of practice ensure that good progress and high standards are maintained across the school. Through Continuing Professional Development and Formation (CPDF), St Simon's ensures that teaching staff are trained and supported in delivering the Religious Education scheme, 'The Way, The Truth and The Life'.

They also undertake CPDF to ensure that Diocesan guidelines and initiatives such as the introduction of a new Relationships and Sex Education Policy are understood and implemented.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS: how effective is the school in providing Catholic Education.

1

This is an outstanding Catholic school

The above judgement on overall effectiveness is based on all the available evidence following the evaluation of:

CATHOLIC LIFE

1

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

1

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

1

Summary of key findings:

- St Simon's is a calm, welcoming and caring school where the Mission Statement, 'Whatever you do, do it for the glory of God' (1 Corinthians 10:31), underlines everything they do and is lived every day by the whole school community
- Pupils feel valued and cared for. They show great commitment to the Church's Mission to help others less fortunate than themselves, and their responses, both within their community and beyond, show their dedication and drive to fulfil the words of their Mission Statement
- Pupils' behaviour is exemplary, in lessons and around the school. They show respect and care for other pupils and for adults and they appreciate the ways in which adults help them to feel safe and nurtured
- Leaders and governors have a clear vision for the school's role in supporting its community. The whole school staff works hard to support the spiritual, emotional, and practical needs of the pupils and their families. This was especially evident in the school's commitment to its families and vulnerable pupils during the recent pandemic
- Teaching is at least good and some is outstanding. Religious Education (RE) lessons are exciting, interactive, and build on pupils' prior knowledge, ensuring creative teaching and learning takes place where pupils are highly motivated and make rapid progress
- Leaders and governors know their school and its community well and work in partnership with the supportive Parish Priest, and the parish, to ensure the school fulfils its mission. The school fulfils all diocesan requirements for RE

- Prayer, and Liturgical Prayer, is varied and interesting, engaging almost all pupils in prayer and reflection. By Year 5, groups of pupils confidently plan and lead prayer in their classes and in their Key Stage
- Staff appreciate the support they receive from the RE lead and Headteacher in developing their skills in leading Prayer and Liturgical Prayer, and in supporting pupils to do so. They speak highly of the support and training they receive from the school and the Diocese, ensuring that St Simon's delivers outstanding Prayer and Liturgical Prayer
- The Headteacher and the RE lead demonstrate deep commitment and understanding of the centrality of their Catholic faith to the leadership of the school. This is strongly supported by the Senior Leadership Team, the governors and the staff and volunteers, ensuring St Simon's continues to be an outstanding school.

What the school needs to do to improve further

- Engage with CPDF offered through the Diocese and elsewhere to support staff in understanding and implementing the new Religious Education Curriculum Directory (RECD) and the Prayer and Liturgy document
- Seek further opportunities to strengthen pupil voice so that pupils are fully engaged in evaluation processes of the Catholic Life, RE and Prayer and Liturgy of the school
- Use the strong assessment procedures already in place to ensure effective and efficient use of the new Age-Related Expectations (AREs) and develop further procedures for working with other schools on assessment and moderation of RE
- For new staff and governors and those taking on new leadership roles, identify their training needs and support them in accessing CPDF as offered by the Diocese and its partners.

Information about the Inspection

The Inspection of St Simon's Catholic Primary School was carried out under the requirements of the Education Act 2005, and in accordance with the Shrewsbury Diocesan Framework and Schedule for Denominational Inspections approved by the Bishop of Shrewsbury. The inspection reviews and evaluates how effective the school is in providing Catholic education. This process begins with the school's own self-evaluation and the inspection schedule follows the criteria set by the National Board of Religious Inspectors and Advisers (NBRIA 2017).

The inspector reviewed in detail the following aspects:

- The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school
- The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school
- How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in Religious Education
- How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship
- The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school
- How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education, Collective Worship and the Catholic Life of the school.

The inspection was carried out by two inspectors over one day

- The inspectors observed teaching and learning in seven classes
- 3 gatherings for Liturgical Prayer were observed by inspectors: 1 in the EYFS Class, 1 in the Y1 class, and 1 for Key Stage Two pupils, led by the Headteacher and Mini Vinnies, in the hall. Each inspector also attended a class praying The Angelus at the end of the morning session
- Discussions were held with the Headteacher and the RE Coordinator, the Chair of Governors and RE link governor, three groups of pupils, representing Mini Vinnies, Restorative Ambassadors and School council, and four members of staff, as well as a written response from the Parish Priest who was unable to be present
- A sample of pupils' RE workbooks was scrutinised from every class
- Evidence of the school's work in the areas of Catholic Life, RE and Collective Worship, including Monitoring records of Teaching and Learning, and the Headteacher's and the RE Coordinator's reports to governors were also scrutinised
- Pupil, parent, and staff questionnaires were reviewed as well as CPDF records for staff and governors
- A range of documents was made available and scrutinised, including the Diocesan Self Evaluation Form (DSEF), the RE Action Plan, the School Improvement Plan, school policies, and minutes of governing body/committee meetings
- The school's website was checked for further evidence
- The monitoring and evaluation of lessons and Collective Worship was discussed with the Headteacher and the governing body representatives
- Displays around the school and in classrooms were also noted.

Information about this school

- St Simon's is a small, one-form entry Voluntary Aided Catholic Primary School, catering for pupils from 4-11 years old. The school has an annual Admission number of 30. There are 184 pupils on roll, of whom 58% are baptised Catholics. St Simon's is currently organised into seven single age classes plus an on-site Nursery.
- St Simon's is one of two Catholic primary schools in the parish of St Peter's, Hazel Grove. The Nursery, which serves the parish, has 26 pupils, some of whom transfer to St Peter's when they start school.
- The Headteacher has been in post since 2016. There has been some change in staffing and governing body membership since the last inspection.
- Staffing includes 9 teachers, plus 1 part-time teacher and 10 support staff. 50% of teachers are Catholic. 3 teachers hold the Catholic Certificate of Religious Studies (CCRS) and 3 are studying for this.

Full report – inspection judgments

CATHOLIC LIFE

The Catholic Life of the school is outstanding

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| The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school | 1 |
| The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school | 1 |
| How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision of the Catholic Life of the school | 1 |

- St Simon’s is an outstanding Catholic primary school, where pupils appreciate, value, and actively participate in the Catholic Life of the school
- The school’s Mission Statement, ‘Whatever you do, do it for the glory of God,’ is at the heart of everything the school does. This is evident in the way in which the school reaches out to support its local and global community
- There are strong links between the school, parish, and home. Despite the restrictions of the recent pandemic, the school found creative ways in which it could engage with and support its pupils and families
- Pupils are confident in expressing their religious beliefs. They can discuss their views on how the school helps to make a difference to their school and to their world
- Pupils’ behaviour is exemplary. They treat each other, staff and visitors with care and respect and there is an environment of warmth and friendliness. One pupil commented: “St Simon’s is a community, we all know each other, know each other’s differences, and respect each other.”
- Pupils enjoy taking on leading roles in the Catholic life of the school and show great commitment to their responsibilities. Pupils are keen to demonstrate their involvement in Mini Vinnies, as Restorative Ambassadors, and on the School Council. They show their concern for the needs of others and work hard to make a difference through their actions. Amongst many valuable acts of kindness, one pupil gave up chocolate for over a year, in order to raise money for a local charity, ‘Millie’s Trust’
- The strong pastoral care provided by the school is recognised and appreciated by the pupils and parents. One pupil said, “There is always someone to go to”. They present as happy, confident young people who are eager to experience the many opportunities they are offered to grow spiritually, emotionally, and physically. One commented, “When I think about my school, I think about my faith.” They understand the importance of their faith within strong, loving relationships
- Staff work hard to ensure that every pupil is included in the full life of the school. Parental and pupil comments show they appreciate this dedication and commitment. All groups of pupils are supported to be the best they can be and this is demonstrated in their understanding and commitment to the STRIVE curriculum, which permeates much of the work of the school

- Staff show great commitment to developing their skills, knowledge, and understanding of the Catholic Life of the school and take advantage of CPDF offered through the Diocese, the parish, and the school
- Staff are excellent role models for the pupils and help to provide an environment where other staff and pupils feel appreciated and nurtured
- Parents comment positively on the commitment of the staff, especially during the recent pandemic. They appreciate the way in which the school kept the pupils safe and worked hard to support pupils and families both spiritually and practically
- The school keeps parents and governors informed of the opportunities for pupils, families, and the parish to become involved in the Catholic life of the school and the community through its website and Twitter feed, as well as using the class and school Dojo, which is much appreciated by parents
- Parents are understanding and supportive of how the school dealt with the restrictions due to the pandemic and how the Catholic Life of the school was shared with families during that time. One 'commented, "I believe the school's ethos is deeply rooted in every aspect of school life." And another, "St Simon's is a wonderful school. It has provided my children with a deep faith and great sense of belonging to both the Catholic faith, school, and St. Peter's community. It's been beautiful to experience faith through my children's learning at school."
- The deeply committed Headteacher and RE lead who is also the Deputy Head, as well as the staff and governors, are clearly focused on the Church's mission in education. They ensure that the Catholic Life of the school is at the centre of all that they do
- The school is accurate in identifying its own strengths and areas for development and seeks the views of all stakeholders in its pursuit of excellence
- Governors are committed and involved in many aspects of the Catholic Life of the school. There is an active RE Link Governor, who also provides a link with the parish. The supportive Parish Priest, along with parish liturgists, participates in many aspects of the Catholic Life of the school including Sacramental preparation. Now that lockdown restrictions have eased, the school is planning to welcome back parents and families to school and parish events
- There is a link governor for RSHE. Governors are kept well informed by the Headteacher and RE Lead and visit school regularly (when COVID19 restrictions allow)
- School leaders and governors take advantage of the training and support offered by the Diocese and regularly attend courses and meetings which support them in their roles. Leaders and governors should now identify the training needs of new staff and governors and those taking on new leadership roles
- There are strong links with the other Catholic school in the parish, and with a third school in another parish, served by the same parish priest. This collaboration supports and enhances the school's development.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Religious Education is outstanding

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| How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education | 1 |
| The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in Religious Education | 1 |
| How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education | 1 |

- In each Key Stage, almost all pupils make at least good, and many make outstanding, progress, despite their varied starting points
- Pupils report that they enjoy the challenge and excitement offered through well-planned, creative lessons and are enthusiastic about their learning. They comment that teachers find, “a fun way of doing RE,” and include, “Art, drama and singing,” in their lessons
- In the RE lessons observed, pupils were able to recall their prior learning and used this to support and develop their knowledge and understanding of what they were studying
- Behaviour in all lessons observed, and around the school, was outstanding. The pupils are keen and eager to learn about all aspects of RE; they are developing a religious literacy which enables them to speak confidently about their RE lessons. Pupils are extremely well motivated and keen to do their best through challenge, praise, and affirmation
- The work in the pupils’ RE books is outstanding. They obviously take considerable pride in the content and presentation of their work, which is interesting and varied. Pupils understand and welcome the use of bronze, silver and gold challenges and enjoy the varied activities planned to match children’s needs and to enhance pupils’ learning and enjoyment
- In the lessons observed during the inspection, teaching was at least good, and much was outstanding
- Teachers and support staff were seen to ensure that all pupils are actively engaged in their learning; they have high expectations of their pupils
- The school complies fully with the requirements of the Bishops’ Conference. Religious Education is well resourced, given parity with other core subjects and at least 10% of the timetable is dedicated to the teaching of RE across all year groups
- For assessment of pupils’ work, the school has been trialling a system, which reflects the move nationally towards Age Related Expectations (ARE) in RE. The school works successfully with its partner schools to moderate and support its judgements
- Throughout the school, well thought out and imaginative displays reflect the current topics and the liturgical year
- Parents are incredibly supportive of the school. One commented: “St Simon’s curriculum is both inclusive and demanding,” and, “I am incredibly impressed by the imaginative and academically rigorous lessons my children are exposed to.”
- The Headteacher and the RE lead are deeply committed, hardworking, supportive, and have a clear vision for the journey of their school, fully supported by the staff, governors, and parents.

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

Collective Worship is outstanding

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| How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship | 1 |
| The quality of provision for Collective Worship | 1 |
| How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship | 1 |

- Inspectors observed 3 separate gatherings for Liturgical Prayer. Liturgical Prayer in both classes and that for KS2, led by the Mini Vinnies, was well planned and pupils' interest was engaged in a variety of ways. Pupils' responses were confident, thoughtful, and relevant. They pray with reverence and know the prayers and responses well
- Pupil-led Liturgical Prayer was related to the current RE topic and the liturgical season of Easter. Pupils are supported and encouraged to plan creative and prayerful experiences
- As they move through the school, pupils gain confidence and expertise in planning and leading Prayer and Liturgical Prayer. By Y5, almost all pupils understand the relevant themes of the Church's year, its feasts, and celebrations, and about how Prayer and Liturgy is structured in different ways for different occasions
- During the inspection, there was an opportunity to observe 2 classes praying the Angelus at 12 noon. This provided a calm, thoughtful opportunity for reflection and the pupils joined in the prayer, adapted for their age and understanding
- In each classroom and in the halls and corridors, there are interactive areas for prayer and reflection related to the liturgical year or the current RE topic
- Prayer is central to the daily life of the school and pupils experience many forms of prayer, during the school day. They are quick to respond to known forms of prayer and much of what they experience is linked to the Mission Statement. From this they are supported to grow spiritually and morally
- The Parish Priest feels that at St Simon's, "...the gospel values of justice, mercy and reconciliation are very much alive...". He, as well as some governors and parishioners, attends many of the school's celebrations. There are close links with the parish for Sacramental programmes and for Liturgical celebrations and the Link Governor for RE is a frequent visitor and support for the school
- Parents are looking forward to being welcomed back into school following the restrictions during the pandemic. They are deeply grateful for the Prayer and Liturgy celebrations provided by the school during that time and for the ways in which they were able to participate as families
- Leaders have ensured that the excellent resources provided for Prayer and Liturgy are used to inspire and promote collective and individual prayer and reflection. This was evident in the classroom-based Liturgical Prayers observed during the inspection
- Pupils enjoy participating in parish family Masses and there is an excellent relationship between the school, families, and the parish. This is much appreciated by the families and the school. The parish TOAST activity (Time On A Sunday Together), which takes place before, during, and after Sunday Mass, has been very successful in engaging pupils and families

- Staff, through CPDF in school and with partner schools, are well-guided and confident in leading prayer and reflection and welcome the opportunities offered to do so
- The RE coordinator and Headteacher ensure that such celebrations are always carefully planned with a clear and relevant message. This is appreciated by pupils, parents and staff who participate joyfully in the school's liturgies. One parent commented: "...everyone in the school is invited and encouraged to walk along the Christian journey of faith with sensitivity and with the utmost dignity..."
- Monitoring of Prayer and Liturgy by the Headteacher and RE lead was suspended during the recent pandemic but has now resumed. When restrictions allow, the RE link governor takes part in monitoring and evaluation and then reports to governors. During monitoring, points for future development are noted and staff and pupils are encouraged to work creatively to plan and deliver meaningful and memorable Prayer and Liturgy
- Leaders and governors, along with the Parish Priest, ensure that Prayer and Liturgy, as well as the RE curriculum, is a central part of the life of the school
- Pupils talk with deep respect about those who are not of the Catholic faith. They are immersed in a faithful, praying community and, through prayer and liturgy, all pupils, irrespective of faith or ability, develop morally and spiritually during their time at St Simon's.