

St Helen's Primary School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	124646
Local authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	380944
Inspection dates	13–14 March 2012
Lead inspector	Richard Blackmore

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	436
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Helleur
Headteacher	Clare Moore
Date of previous school inspection	2 October 2006
School address	St Helen's Church Lane Woodbridge Road Ipswich IP4 2LT
Telephone number	01473 251333
Fax number	01473 221913
Email address	admin@sthelensprimary.net

Age group	3–11
Inspection date(s)	13–14 March 2012
Inspection number	380944



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Piccadilly Gate
Store St
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2012



Introduction

Inspection team

Richard Blackmore

Additional inspector

Meg Hackney

Additional inspector

Christopher Christofides

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed 15 teachers in 20 lessons or parts of lessons. These included a joint observation with the headteacher. Inspectors held meetings with groups of pupils; with the Chair of the Governing Body and two other governors; and with school staff, including senior and middle managers. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents including the school development plan and assessment information. They analysed 179 parental questionnaires. They also looked at Ofsted's on-line questionnaire (Parent View) but no responses were recorded.

Information about the school

This is a larger-than-average-sized primary school. About half of the pupils are White British, with the rest coming from a variety of minority ethnic backgrounds. About a third of pupils speak English as an additional language, and this proportion is increasing. A high proportion of these pupils, particularly those who have started school recently, are at the early stages of learning English. The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is below average. The school meets the current floor standard set by the government, which determines the minimum expectations for attainment and progress. It has gained numerous awards including the Healthy School award and the Activemark. The headteacher has been in post for a year. There is a before-school and after-school club, managed by the governing body.

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	1
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- This is a good school. Pupils, parents and carers are very positive about the school and its inclusive ethos. They welcome the way it develops pupils' excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness, keeps pupils safe, and encourages outstanding behaviour. The school is not outstanding because progress in mathematics is slower than in English, and teaching is not outstanding.
- Pupils make good progress and achieve well, reaching average attainment by the end of Year 6. Attainment is higher in English than in mathematics, where progress is slower because there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to investigate and solve number problems. Teachers do not often tell pupils where they are going wrong in mathematics.
- Pupils say they feel very safe in school. Their behaviour is excellent in lessons. This is particularly the case where they are fully engaged by their learning. They enjoy school, evidenced by their above-average attendance rate, and say that misbehaviour and bullying is very rare and is effectively dealt with by their teachers.
- Teaching is good. There is much teaching which enthuses pupils and helps them make rapid progress. However, in some lessons, there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to complete tasks independently and work is not always well matched to the needs of individual pupils. This is especially so in the provision for higher attaining pupils in Key Stage 1.
- The very effective headteacher works well with senior colleagues and the governing body. Together, they provide good leadership and management, promote a strong sense of community and sustain a good breadth of curricular activity that effectively supports the development of pupils' academic skills and personal qualities. The headteacher's detailed and accurate evaluation of teachers' performance gives a strong foundation for improving the quality of teaching and accelerating pupils' progress further.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- By the end of the summer term 2012, raise achievement in mathematics by ensuring that:
 - there are more opportunities for pupils to investigate and solve problems
 - teachers consistently tell pupils more clearly how to improve and give them opportunities to review and revise work which has been marked.

- By the start of the autumn term 2012, improve the quality of teaching by:
 - raising the level of challenge for higher attainers in Key Stage 1
 - providing more tasks for pupils to complete by themselves.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Children's skills on entry vary considerably from year to year and reflect a very wide range of pre-school learning experiences but, overall, are below those expected, especially in communication, language and literacy, with few children exceeding expectations for their age. Children's personal, social and emotional skills are in line with expectations; this helps significantly in their attitudes to learning when they first start school. The school's focus on daily phonics, (how the letters in words relate to how they sound) and the systematic development of letter-formation skills enable children in Nursery and Reception to make good progress, particularly in their alphabet recognition work. This work is built on well as pupils get older. As a result, the gap between the standards reached by Bangladeshi pupils and other groups is closing quickly. Observations of pupils' learning in lessons, and when receiving additional adult support in small groups further up the school, confirm that the pupils' broadly average attainment by the end of Year 6 represents good achievement. Standards in reading by the end of Key Stage 1 are below average but, at the end of Key Stage 2, they are slightly above average and rising. Pupils' written work is characterised by a rich vocabulary, clear and imaginative expression, and neat and well-formed handwriting. Spelling and punctuation are generally accurate but work is occasionally marred by careless grammatical errors.

All groups of pupils, including boys and girls, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, including those with behavioural difficulties, make good progress due to excellent relationships with adults. Those pupils who are new to English also make good progress because staff use a wide variety of resources that develop language skills quickly. These strategies, coupled with additional training, ensure staff maintain and build upon the skills necessary to meet the pupils' needs. This is also the case for staff in the before- and after-school clubs, who provide a wide range of activities that interest and stimulate pupils. More targeted, guided group work in and out of class this academic year is accelerating pupils' progress in reading, and secures good progress as pupils move through the school. For example, the 'Forefront' and 'Journeys' projects effectively support pupils with their language development and raise aspirations through events such as a community tea with a range of community leaders including the Mayor and the Bishop of Ipswich. Most parents and carers rightly believe that their children are making good progress.

Quality of teaching

Lessons are planned in considerable detail and are carefully constructed to build up pupils' skills and understanding through a variety of well-designed activities. Highly efficient organisation ensures that lessons proceed as planned, with no time lost, for example, when pupils move between classrooms for phonics sessions. Teachers use information from assessment well to identify relevant learning objectives, and usually plan work which accurately meets pupils' needs. Most of the time, teachers use questioning well to make links with previous work and to extend pupils' thinking. Teachers employ interactive whiteboard technology successfully to engage pupils, and plan effective opportunities for pupils to learn through practical activities, including research, role-play, games and investigations. For example, pupils in Year 6 responded very positively to measuring fingerprints with considerable accuracy as part of a 'crime scene' which was effectively linked to a drama session. The systematic development of pupils' reading and writing through daily phonics teaching, accompanied by regular adult-guided reading in groups, is a consistent strength across the school. For example, guided reading is used effectively to advance pupils' understanding and ability to tackle 'tricky' words.

Pupils' work is marked regularly and teachers provide some explanations about how it could be improved, but not frequently enough in mathematics. Teachers do not always refer enough to individual targets during lessons. Mostly, pupils respond to the teacher's advice but teachers do not always insist on their correction of spelling or punctuation errors. The curriculum is very well planned to enable teachers to extend pupils' essential skills, knowledge and understanding at the correct level and across all subjects. Lessons have a measured pace which helps pupils to consolidate knowledge and assimilate new learning. Teachers contribute to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively, for example by building up their confidence, their positive attitudes to work and their aspirations for success. Even so, there are not enough opportunities for pupils to use their skills for themselves because lessons are overly directed by teachers, particularly in mathematics. This limits the progress pupils make. Many parents and carers express their confidence in the quality of teaching in the school. Several were very complimentary about the work of individual teachers, one saying 'We have continually been impressed with the teaching and behaviour.' This positive impression is an accurate reflection of the quality of teaching in the school.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils enjoy school very much, one saying 'I enjoy everything!' They are extremely polite to adults and highly respectful of each other and their school surroundings. Almost all parents and carers responding to the inspection questionnaire agree that there is a good standard of behaviour at the school. Excellent behaviour was evident in all lessons observed during the inspection and this is supported by records and questionnaires indicating that this is typical. A few parents and carers, writing on their questionnaires, expressed some concern about bullying. Pupils say bullying is very rare and that the school deals with all types of bullying very well if it does occur. They are acutely aware of the different forms of bullying, including bullying that uses new technology, and understand what to do to prevent it occurring. This is because the curriculum provides highly effective opportunities to discuss and ask questions

about cyber-bullying and how to use the internet safely. Staff record meticulously any behaviour-related issues or misdemeanours. The school's comprehensive tracking records show these are few, are dealt with promptly and involve parents and carers. The school is robust in ensuring regular attendance and punctuality. There has been an improvement in attendance, which is above average, due to the rigorous implementation of the school's strict attendance policy. The excellent quality of the pupils' moral and social development, and their sense of community, means they are highly considerate towards each other, whether at work or play during school hours, or at the warm and friendly before and after school clubs.

Leadership and management

The leadership of the school has rightly placed a strong focus on developing basic skills in English and mathematics and pupils' confidence in the use of information and communication technology. Across the school, there is a coherent and systematic approach to teaching reading with a balanced emphasis on letters and sounds. Through rigorous performance management, staff are held accountable for their impact on standards and achievement. Very effective professional development means that there is a rich source of quality expertise relevant to the school's needs. Self-evaluation draws on a wide range of evidence to identify accurately the school's strengths and areas to improve. Monitoring is an effective tool in strengthening teaching and assessment to secure the pupils' good personal and academic achievements. The school has a clear commitment to, and effective systems for promoting, equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination. It has a range of effective partnerships: these include providing opportunities in music and sport and to support pupils who have a range of physical, learning, emotional and behavioural needs and their families.

The governing body is highly supportive of the school, effectively manages the resources and provides a good level of challenge. This is because it has an excellent understanding of the academic performance of pupils through the performance and attainment committee which focuses on pupils' achievement. There is an appreciation by pupils of the school's good curriculum with numerous well-attended clubs including judo, knitting and netball. One parent commented, 'The school offers lots of extra-curricular activities that my children really enjoy and benefit from.' The curriculum promotes extremely well the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. They have a very strong sense of the difference between right and wrong and reflect thoughtfully on their experiences. This shapes their highly positive actions and behaviour in lessons. The school is active in seeking parents' and carers' participation in the school community. The welcoming environment is supported by many effective initiatives, including workshops and information events. For example, Year 6 pupils enthusiastically shared their Henry Moore sculptures and the skills they used with their families. At the end of the afternoon pupils handed out evaluations for guests to complete as to whether the session had explained the work undertaken by pupils. One parent said, 'The school involves parents and the community very well...and embraces the cultural diversity of its local population.'

Most parents and carers who returned their questionnaires agreed that the school meets their children's needs successfully. They agree that the arrangements for safeguarding their children have a suitably high priority; the rigour of these was

confirmed during the inspection. Procedures for safeguarding pupils meet statutory requirements and staff training in child protection is regularly updated as new appointments are made. The improvements in attendance, as well as the closing of the gap in Bangladeshi pupils' progress, show that the school has a good capacity for sustained improvement.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all 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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and 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 governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



15 March 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Helen's Primary School, Ipswich, IP4 2LT

Thank you for being so welcoming when we came to visit your school. Your school provides you with a good education.

- You make good progress, particularly in reading. Keep reading as often as you can.
- We were very impressed with your excellent behaviour and very positive attitudes to your work.
- You told us how much you enjoy coming to school.
- You told us how you feel very safe in the school.
- Your spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is well supported by your school. We particularly liked the way you worked extremely well with one another.
- Teaching is good and your lessons are interesting and fun.
- Your headteacher leads the school very well.

Your school is keen to make things even better for you. We have asked the staff to do two things. We want your teachers to give you more opportunities to solve problems and carry out investigations in mathematics. We also want your teachers to help those of you who learn quickly to have activities that always fully challenge you and remind you more frequently of your targets.

You can help by making sure that you do your best, keep concentrating in lessons and saying if you find work too easy.

Thank you again for welcoming us to your school and our best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Richard Blackmore
Lead inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone **0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.**