

St Helen's Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111605
Local Authority	Hartlepool
Inspection number	356948
Inspection dates	5–6 May 2011
Reporting inspector	Joy Frost HMI

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	275
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr David Hammond
Headteacher	Mrs Vivienne Ingleton
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Durham Street Hartlepool County Durham TS24 0HG
Telephone number	01429 267038
Fax number	01429 274377
Email address	admin.sthelens@schools.hartlepool.gov.uk

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Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester
M2 7LA

T: 0300 123 4234

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors. The inspection team observed 18 lessons and saw 11 teachers teach. Meetings were held with senior and middle leaders, staff, two groups of pupils and representatives of the governing body. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at documents relating to pupils' progress and attainment, monitoring and evaluation, safeguarding and the curriculum. The work in pupils' books in English and mathematics in all classes was also scrutinised, as were the 57 questionnaires returned from parents and carers.

- The achievement of boys and higher-ability pupils to determine whether teaching is sufficiently challenging.
- How effectively teachers use assessment information in day-to-day planning to improve pupils' writing skills.
- How effectively the curriculum underpins the development of pupils' basic skills.
- How effectively the school cares for, guides and supports its pupils.
- The effectiveness of procedures for monitoring and evaluating the school's work.

Information about the school

St Helen's is an average-sized primary school. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is high at 42% and rising year-on-year. An above average proportion of pupils are identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities and some of these pupils have complex learning needs including social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage. The headteacher, deputy headteacher and senior leaders are all new to their posts since the previous inspection.

There is a satellite children's centre and Leapfrogs Playgroup on site, which are not managed by the governing body. These were inspected separately and the reports can be obtained from the Ofsted website.

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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

This is a satisfactory and rapidly improving school. The outstanding quality of the school's care, guidance and support and the meticulous attention to detail of the procedures to safeguard pupils is supporting many pupils in overcoming barriers to learning. When children enter the Nursery they have skills, knowledge and understanding which are well below those expected of three-year-olds especially in communication, language and literacy development and in their knowledge and understanding of the world. They settle very quickly into school routines and have a very positive start to their education. As pupils move through the school the majority make good progress in mathematics and satisfactory progress in reading to attain standards which are improving to broadly average over time. Attainment in writing is weaker.

Pupils are confident and caring; they form good relationships with each other and adults. In lessons and around the school their behaviour is good and they enjoy their learning. Pupils say they feel very safe in school and that adults are there to help them. The school supports pupils' safety to and from school with a walking bus and the provision of free cycling helmets so that many can cycle to school safely. Previous low attendance has been tackled successfully and the school is rigorous in following up pupil absence, resulting in rising attendance and rapidly decreasing amounts of persistent absenteeism.

In lessons observed all pupils were making at least satisfactory progress. Pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable, or who have special educational needs and/or disabilities receive extra help and support, often from teaching assistants, who provide one-to-one support, which enables them to make at least satisfactory progress and to access learning. Teachers plan different activities for different ability groups in lessons but in writing pupils often carry out the same tasks. Assessment is carried out regularly but pupils have too many writing books, and marking from one book is not always picked up in another book; therefore pupils are not always sure what to do to improve their work. In some classes for older pupils marking is exemplary and pupils are given the opportunity to revise and improve their work. In these classes pupils make better progress. There is also an over-reliance on worksheets in most classes but especially for the younger pupils. The curriculum is constantly being revised under topic themes which better engage boys and develop 'mini challenges' for higher-ability pupils. The use of information and communication technology (ICT) in lessons to support learning is limited. Teachers are not using the everyday assessments they collect to plan lessons in writing which challenge the higher-ability pupils or give all pupils opportunities to develop their writing throughout the curriculum.

Senior leaders work well together and have an accurate view of the school's performance. The school has shown success in raising attainment for all pupils in mathematics and reading, and in improving attendance. Some senior leaders are new to their roles but they

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are developing their skills well. The school has identified the correct areas for improvement and has a planned programme of monitoring and evaluation. However, targets for improvement are not sufficiently focused and this makes it difficult for senior leaders to identify which actions are having the most impact on helping pupils reach the challenging targets they are set. Therefore the school has a satisfactory capacity to sustain these improvements.

Up to 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve pupils' progress in writing across the school by:
 - providing more challenging writing opportunities
 - improving the marking in books so that pupils know how to improve their writing
 - providing more writing opportunities in different subjects to enable pupils to practise their skills
 - revising the use of assessment criteria for writing so that it is broken down into smaller steps
 - limiting the use of worksheets for the younger and higher-ability pupils.
- Improve all teaching and learning to good, particularly in English, by:
 - using day-to-day assessments to plan lessons for different groups of pupils which better meet their individual needs
 - using ICT more widely in lessons to support learning.
- Improve the effectiveness of monitoring and evaluation procedures by:
 - developing the skills of middle leaders
 - planning actions for improvement which are measurable and specifically focused on pupils' outcomes
 - focusing monitoring activities more closely on the identified areas for improvement to check which are having the greatest impact.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Pupils' attainment is rising and from low starting points they make good progress in mathematics and satisfactory progress in English. During the inspection boys were particularly well engaged in learning and data shows that pupils known to be eligible for free school meals often make good progress, and pupils identified for extra support and intervention make progress in line with their peers. Pupils engage well with all that the school offers; they have a good moral compass and know the difference between right and wrong. Pupils are active in the playground at break times and were observed playing well together and acting as buddies. Many pupils take part in extra-curricular clubs and a large proportion of pupils choose to cycle to school. Pupils are encouraged to have a voice in the school and are confident that the staff will act on any suggestions. The bully and worry boxes suggested by the school council and school forum are well used and there are

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few incidents of bullying recorded in the school. Pupils have a heightened awareness of their own safety within and outside of school including knowledge of cyber bullying, and can talk about how to live a healthy lifestyle and make healthy choices. Spiritual, moral and social development is good. Pupils listen attentively in assemblies and they enjoy the many opportunities throughout the year to worship together with their parents and carers in the local church. Cultural development is satisfactory. Pupils have a satisfactory knowledge of different faiths and cultures but a limited understanding of the wider aspects of life in multicultural Britain.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
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	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

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

How effective is the provision?

This is a very caring nurturing school where individual pupils and their families are very well supported. The work of the school inclusion officer is exemplary in offering nurturing and support to pupils, and their parents and carers. Procedures to support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are rigorous in seeking the correct support for individuals and their families. The school can demonstrate striking examples where they have helped pupils to overcome significant barriers to learning. The procedures put in place to better engage boys are effective in narrowing the gap between boys' and girls' attainment by the end of Year 6 and in tackling the previous underachievement of boys in writing in Key Stage 1. Senior leaders have also been proactive in accessing high-quality training to enable teachers and teaching assistants to deliver their own speech and

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language programmes. The school has very high expectations of pupils' behaviour and this underpins pupils' good personal development.

There are very well planned opportunities within the curriculum for personal, social and health education and a good range of visits and visitors to the school to enrich the curriculum. However, the curriculum is not yet underpinning pupils' basic skills development in all subjects and there is a lack of opportunity for pupils to use ICT as a tool to support learning in classrooms.

Teaching is better in mathematics than in English because in mathematics lessons activities better match pupils' abilities, have good pace and there is more challenge for higher-ability pupils. In writing lessons the activities sometimes limit the ability of more able pupils to write at length. Marking in most writing books is congratulatory and not linked to pupils' individual targets for improvement. The use of assessment information from marking is not used to plan day-to-day learning for different groups and therefore there is a lack of challenge, especially for higher-ability pupils. Also, the assessment criteria used to moderate writing against National Curriculum levels is not as well developed as it is in reading and mathematics.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
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	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher and her deputy work well together and are developing the skills of new leaders through opportunities to engage in monitoring and evaluation, and coaching and mentoring sessions. Phase leaders are involved in driving improvements and in discussing pupils' progress in individual classes. Procedures in place to monitor the school's work are effective but lack real focus on identifying what is working well and what is not. The governing body is active in the school and is beginning to become involved in challenging the school's work and holding staff to account for pupils' outcomes. They ensure that procedures to safeguard pupils are carried out meticulously and go way beyond expectations in checking and reviewing policies. Discrimination is tackled successfully and there is equality of opportunity for all pupils. As a result, school data are showing a narrowing of the gap between boys' and girls' attainment and between pupils with complex needs and their peers nationally. Community cohesion is promoted satisfactorily with a clear plan of action. Despite the school's concerted efforts to develop national partnerships with schools in different ethnic and socio-economic circumstances, some actions are progressing slowly.

Parents and carers in the school who responded to the questionnaire were overwhelmingly supportive of the school's work. They recognise the very effective support the school

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provides for them and their children. Some parents and carers are reluctant to engage with the school but staff do not see this as a barrier and are constantly seeking new and exciting ways to involve them in the life of the school. They have been successful in increasing the number of dads who attend gardening and painting activities. There are well attended nurture and support groups for parents and carers of vulnerable pupils. Similarly, engagement with a raft of outside and health agencies and the rigorous way issues are followed up is a testament to the outstanding care, guidance and support the school offers.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
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

The Early Years Foundation Stage outdoor area has been recently reorganised and this is having a positive impact on children's achievements in all six areas of learning. Well thought-out activities engage and motivate children's imagination, for example, the 'bug hotel' and barrel drumming, and encourage them to develop their vocabulary and initiate their own learning. The internal provision is less well resourced and there is a lack of opportunities for children to write independently and develop their creativity. Children have skills and knowledge generally well below expected when they enter Nursery, especially in the development of language and in their knowledge and understanding of the world. They make good progress in developing their personal qualities, behaviour and confidence, and by the time they enter Year 1 are achieving near national expectations in most areas of development and attainment is rising year-on-year.

Welfare and hygiene arrangements are very well met and children are aware of the importance of hand washing and how to keep themselves healthy. This has a high priority in the unit and children are encouraged to brush their teeth during the day by key workers who know and support children well. Assessments are carried out frequently and good

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learning journals accurately capture children's achievements well. The new leader of the unit is already developing her skills and building on previous good practice with the support of the headteacher and the local authority and has a clear plan for the future.

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

Just over 20% of parents and carers returned questionnaires, which is a low response for primary schools. The vast majority were very supportive of the school and were particularly pleased with the school's care, guidance and support, how safe their children are in school and how much they enjoy their education. A typical comment was, 'My child looks forward to going to school. He is really happy there and staff are always happy to help.'

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Helen's 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 57 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 275 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	24	42	31	54	1	2	1	2
The school keeps my child safe	34	60	23	40	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	24	42	30	53	2	4	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	24	42	29	51	4	7	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	25	44	31	54	1	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	24	42	31	54	2	4	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	27	47	24	42	3	5	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)	23	40	31	54	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	22	39	32	56	2	4	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	23	40	30	53	2	4	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	20	35	31	54	2	4	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	19	33	35	61	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	30	53	24	42	1	2	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 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	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

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 are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 December 2010 and 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.

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

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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 pupils' 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 May 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Helen's Primary School, Hartlepool, TS24 0HG

I am writing on behalf of the inspection team to thank you so much for the warm welcome you gave us when we visited your school recently to see how well you were learning. You were eager to talk to us and tell us about your school. We found that your school is satisfactory and improving rapidly. We agree with you that staff take very good care of you and we think that this aspect of their work is outstanding along with the procedures to keep you all safe. We found that you are improving your attainment in mathematics and reading well but still have some way to go to improve your writing. Therefore, we have asked your headteacher to make some changes to the way you are taught writing and to the curriculum to make it more exciting and help you know what to do to improve your work.

We have asked teachers to:

- improve marking so that it tells you specifically what you need to do to improve your work, and is closely linked to your targets and gives you time to edit your work
- give you more opportunities to write in different lessons and not just on a Friday, and use less worksheets so that those of you who can do harder work can decide for yourselves how to set out your work
- give you more opportunities to use information and communication technology in lessons so that you are able to develop your writing.

We have also asked the headteacher to check more closely how new initiatives are developing and focus more on what you are learning in lessons.

You can help your teachers by continuing to attend school regularly.

Yours sincerely

Joy Frost

Her Majesty's Inspector

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