

St Helen's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106640
Local authority	Barnsley
Inspection number	377435
Inspection dates	25–26 April 2012
Lead inspector	Alan Lemon

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	148
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Eddie Goddard
Headteacher	Stephen Harrison
Date of previous school inspection	30 June 2008
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Introduction

Inspection team

Alan Lemon

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Six lessons were observed involving five teachers. Meetings were held with a group of pupils, members of the governing body and staff. The inspector observed the school's work, and looked at important school documents including policies and procedures for safeguarding pupils, data and reports on pupils' performance and school self-evaluation. Sixty five questionnaires completed by parents and carers were scrutinised as well as questionnaires from staff and pupils.

Information about the school

The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school and is one of three Catholic primary schools federated and governed by a single governing body. An executive headteacher has been appointed and is expected to take up the post in September 2012. At the time of the inspection, building work to enlarge the entrance, administrative offices and library was underway.

Almost all pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus and pupils with a statement of special educational needs is average. The school meets the current floor standard, which sets the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

The school has Healthy School status, receiving the silver award in December 2009. The Basic Skills Quality Mark was renewed in May 2011.

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	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. The school is not outstanding overall because pupils' achievement is not as good in mathematics, science, geography and history as in English. This is because expectations are not as high in these subjects.
- Achievement is good. The proportion of pupils making expected progress has increased each year over five years and is well above average. Of these, an increasing and now significant number make more progress than expected. Currently pupils, including children in the Reception Year, make similar good progress and in Year 6 overall attainment is above average.
- Teaching is good and is strongest in English as a result of recent improvements in its curriculum and in the teaching strategies used. English lessons and most lessons in mathematics are lively, fast paced, challenging and enjoyed by pupils. However, some tasks set in mathematics lack challenge.
- Pupils' behaviour is outstanding and they feel safe. They thoroughly enjoy school and attendance is above average. Pupils are keen to learn and to do well. The school's values have a very positive influence on pupils. Pupils have very good regard for others and those less fortunate than themselves. They are concerned to behave well and by their example they encourage each other to do so.
- Leadership and management are good. The federation has given added impetus to improvement which has impacted significantly on English. Key aspects of the school's work are rigorously monitored; teaching and pupils' performance in particular. This informs the ambitious targets set for teachers. Other aspects are not given this rigorous evaluation which has meant the challenge for pupils in some subjects is not as high. The school's distinctive ethos permeates its work and promotes pupils' outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise pupils' achievement in all subjects to the same high level as that in English by:
 - ensuring that in lessons other than English, pupils are challenged consistently and that tasks engage them fully
 - ensuring that leaders monitor and evaluate pupils' performance and the quality of provision as rigorously in all subjects as they do in English.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

Pupils make good progress. The large majority enter the Reception Year at the level expected in all areas of their development. In 2011, Year 6 pupils made significant progress between the end of Key Stages 1 and 2. Their attainment in reading, writing and mathematics was above average at the end of Year 6. Currently, the attainment of pupils in Year 6 is above average. The gap in the performance of groups of pupils at risk of attaining less well is significantly narrower than that seen nationally. All parents and carers responding to the questionnaire rightly believe their children make good progress.

Pupils are clear about, and respond very well to, the school's high expectations in regard to work and achievement. Throughout the school, very positive attitudes to learning lead pupils to settling quickly in lessons and to sustaining interest and effort. This is firmly established at an early stage. In the Reception Year, many children have made rapid progress in their personal, social and emotional development. In pairs and in small groups, children choose their activities and are involved in these for substantial amounts of time. Children are confident, self-motivating and creative. They sustain good relationships, cooperation and a constant flow of conversation. They enjoy their activities and learn to read, write and count with a positive sense of purpose. In a mathematics exercise, they eagerly helped each other get a string of numbers in the right order which ensured everyone learnt.

In Key Stages 1 and 2, pupils' performance in English is edging ahead of mathematics. Recent professional development in the teaching of English and the improvement in its curriculum have strengthened the quality of learning. In English, a finer match of work to pupils' abilities and grouping by attainment for teaching lead to consistently challenging work. In addition, this ensures disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress. Pupils are successfully encouraged and develop an interest in reading. They have regular opportunities to read and a good choice of books. In the Reception class and Key Stage 1, pupils benefit from the systematic development of their reading skills, through expert teaching of letters and sounds. Attainment in reading by the end of Year 2 is above average. In a writing lesson, pupils thought methodically about improving their sentences and how they might place words and incorporate adverbs and adjectives. Speaking their sentences before writing brought clarity. This stimulated writing and made it effective. Pupils took great care in drafting their work and some were

meticulous in making corrections. Moreover, pupils make very good use of video and animation to write scripts, create storyboards and film their stories. One group produced an excellent animation about the potential risks of social networking. Effective strategies for learning developed in English are not as evident in mathematics. Although pupils consolidate their knowledge, skills and understanding and make good progress overall, including disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, on occasion pupils are not stretched by their mathematics work which focuses overly on revision. In Years 5 and 6, pupils demonstrated a good grasp of percentages, fractions and decimal equivalents but this was not built upon with challenging new work.

Quality of teaching

Lessons are well planned and they are taught with the assurance given by teachers' good subject expertise and knowledge of pupils. All teachers and their assistants have a positive rapport with pupils, stimulated and guided by the school's distinctive ethos and the cohesive community to which staff, pupils, parents and carers are closely attached. This promotes pupils' self-confidence, curiosity and positive attitude to learning. Parents and carers greatly appreciate the school's values because of the significant contribution they make to their children's personal development and well-being. In Reception, children's excellent behaviour and well-developed social skills mean they take full advantage of a breadth of well-planned activities. Teaching focuses effectively on children improving their language, literacy and numeracy skills.

The teaching of English is consistently good whereas in mathematics it varies and is sometimes satisfactory. This reflects differences in the strengths of leadership of the subjects and the impact of improvements in English driven by the federation. In one lesson linking sounds and letters, the teacher was very attentive to pupils' intonation and quickly corrected mistakes. Pupils moved on rapidly and learnt a range of complex sounds, confidently applying these to reading new and more difficult words. Pupils' short, sharp practise of literacy skills at the start of lessons consolidates learning very effectively, creates great pace, good challenge and much enjoyment. In English, teachers use assessment effectively to organise pupils from different age groups but of similar ability into small classes which give sharp focus to appropriately challenging tasks. Pupils of all attainments, including disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, benefit in this arrangement, reflected clearly in how teachers have closed gaps in the performance of different groups of pupils in this subject. Mathematics is taught systematically but sometimes overcautiously by spending too much time consolidating what is already well learnt by pupils. Nevertheless, pupils learn well over time and evidence shows that disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress. The strong features of teaching developed in English have not been adopted in mathematics, and the pace and challenge of learning are not always as great. Pupils feel that the quality of their learning is best in English and they have a greater knowledge of how they are progressing in this subject. The use of individual targets in English is much more developed than in mathematics. Pupils say they enjoy science least because they find copying out texts of topics tedious. This is evident from their science books as well as in history and geography.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Outstanding behaviour results from the impact on pupils' outlook and attitudes of the school's distinctive ethos and its well-established values. All of the parents and carers expressing their views believe their children are safe and almost all agree bullying is dealt with effectively. Their views are strongly supported by inspection evidence. Pupils are concerned to behave well, respect others and assure each other's safety and well-being. From an early age they relate to each other extremely well and work together very constructively. Pupils have a sharp and critical view of behaviour in school over time, believing it to be consistently good. They acknowledge some bullying but say that it is very rarely physical and more likely to be verbal in nature. Pupils feel safe because they can tell staff and incidents are well dealt with. Staff have high expectations in regard to behaviour and manage it very effectively through constant positive reinforcement. Pupils have learnt about the different forms bullying takes. Their delightful animation dramatizing the risks in social networking emphasises the priority given to keeping pupils safe and free from harassment. There is provision made in school, which pupils value, for them to seek counselling and support from a member of staff when they have worries. Strong links between school, families and local agencies lead to good support at home when required. Above average attendance together with an improving trend in attendance is one good outcome of these links.

Leadership and management

Overall, strong, consistent leadership maintains the school's clear direction. The school's ethos and values run very effectively through all of its work promoting equality of opportunity effectively and reinforcing the school's commitment to tackle any discrimination. There is a good engagement with parents and carers and the school provides a warm atmosphere in which pupils thrive. Pupils are safeguarded through well-implemented policies and procedures that fully meet requirements. The staff are a cohesive team, whose performance management furthers the school's high expectations, maintains its good capacity for further improvement and is raising pupils' achievement.

The governing body of the federation has a clear vision for the future and is succeeding in creating a single identity for the three schools. Staff value the federation for the strength it brings in improving provision for pupils and offering wider opportunities for professional development. Teachers and teaching assistants from the three schools meet regularly to share good practice, moderate assessments and train together. The good quality of teaching has been maintained although it has improved as a result of the developments in English and some features are outstanding. Teaching, assessment and pupils' progress are rigorously evaluated. Leaders closely track pupils' performance and have set ambitious targets aiming at consistently good progress for all groups of pupils. The outcome is positive as there has been an upward trend in the overall rate of pupils' progress. Monitoring is not to the same depth in evaluating other aspects of the school's work. Improvement needed in the challenges offered by pupils' work in science, history and geography are not being tackled as robustly.

The good curriculum provides a wide range of work, activities and experiences that contribute effectively to pupils' achievement and outstandingly to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Most of all, pupils enjoy and value the many educational visits, residential experiences and after-school clubs. This breadth of experience widens their outlook considerably.

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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	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 to 31 December 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.
Floor standards	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures
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.



27 April 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Helen's Catholic Primary School, Barnsley S74 9DL

Many thanks for the very warm welcome when I inspected your school. Many thanks also to those pupils who met with me and those who read to me. Your school is a good school. These are some of the strong features I found.

- You make good progress. You enjoy learning and are keen to do well. By the end of Year 6 your attainment in English and mathematics is above average.
- Teaching is good, especially in English. You learn at a fast pace in lively, challenging lessons. Sometimes mathematics lessons did not challenge you. You mentioned science was your least enjoyable subject because of the amount of copying you had to do. This showed in your science books and also in your geography and history books.
- Your behaviour is outstanding. You make every effort to behave well. You encourage each other's good behaviour and you support the school's values of respecting and helping others. Your spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding as a result.
- The headteacher and staff lead and manage the school well and ensure teaching and the curriculum are improving.

I have asked the headteacher to ensure a close check is kept on science, geography and history and to some extent mathematics, to ensure your work in these subjects is always challenging.

You can help by keeping up your good attendance and hard work. I wish you all the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Alan Lemon
Lead inspector

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