

St Helen's Church of England Primary School

Abbotsham, Bideford, Devon, EX39 5AP

Inspection dates 29–30 January 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Pupils achieve well and attainment is above the national average by the time they leave in Year 6.
- Progress has accelerated since the last inspection so that it is now good in all year groups and in all subjects.
- Teaching is consistently good with some outstanding features, such as the way teachers motivate and interest pupils in their learning.
- Standards in reading are high because reading skills are taught systematically and in interesting ways. Pupils are encouraged to read widely across a range of literature.
- Pupils' outstanding behaviour makes a strong contribution to their effective learning in lessons. They enjoy taking on responsibilities such as friendship leaders.
- The leadership and management of the school, including governance, are good. The very effective headteacher has motivated staff so that they aspire to continually improve their practice.
- Systems for checking teachers' work are extensive and thorough. These, together with carefully planned training activities for staff, have helped to improve the pupils' learning.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- There is not enough outstanding teaching yet because sometimes the work does not allow pupils to explore ideas for themselves and evaluate their own learning.
- The curriculum does not provide sufficient opportunities for pupils to use new technology to enhance their learning.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 13 lessons, of which two were joint observations with the headteacher. In addition, inspectors made a number of short visits to lessons.
- Meetings were held with pupils, members of the governing body, the headteacher and the school's senior staff. Also, the lead inspector spoke with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the 47 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) as well as consulting informally with parents and carers before school.
- They observed the school's work, looked at a range of documents including the school's improvement plans, data on pupils' current progress, planning and monitoring files, the governing body minutes and records relating to special educational needs, behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.
- The inspectors heard pupils read, talked to them in lessons and evaluated samples of their work.

Inspection team

Sandra Woodman, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

Gary Kirkley

Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This school is smaller than the average primary school.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for children in local authority care and pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, is below average.
- The proportion of pupils with special educational needs supported at school action and the proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs are below average.
- The large majority of pupils are White British and come from the surrounding area.
- The new headteacher took up the position in spring 2012.
- The school offers no alternative provision.
- The school exceeds the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the proportion of outstanding teaching by:
 - increasing the opportunities for pupils to extend their thinking and find things out for themselves in lessons
 - ensuring pupils are involved in evaluating their learning more systematically.
- Improve the curriculum by extending the opportunities for pupils to use new technology to enhance their learning.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children join the Reception class with skills that are broadly in line with those expected for their age, although this fluctuates from year to year. Achievement is good in the Early Years Foundation Stage across most areas, and especially in reading, where progress is outstanding.
- Since the last inspection, attainment has risen to be above average at Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. This is because progress has accelerated year on year across the school for pupils of all abilities. The gap is closing between the progress made by boys and girls in English so that both achieve well.
- Improvements to the ways pupils are assessed and their progress tracked are ensuring that any pupils who fall behind are identified promptly and helped to catch up. The precise match of work to their ability is helping to motivate and inspire pupils to achieve high standards.
- The pupils supported by the pupil premium and those with special educational needs make progress in line with their classmates relative to their starting points. Often, they attain as highly as others in their age group. This is improving because of the recent focus on developing pupils' personal skills and emotional well-being along with their academic skills.
- Learning in lessons is good and sometimes outstanding when pupils are required to extend their thinking and apply their knowledge and skills to 'real-life' situations. Sometimes, their learning is limited when they do not have enough opportunities to take their ideas forward for themselves and evaluate how well they are doing.
- Standards in reading are high and the majority of pupils reach standards above the national average. Pupils delight in their reading of a range of authors and styles of texts. The rigorous programme for teaching reading across the school has enabled all pupils to acquire new skills quickly and successfully.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is consistently good with some that is outstanding. This profile has improved considerably over the past year due to the implementation of thorough systems for checking the work of teachers with an increased focus on the progress pupils make.
- In the best lessons, teachers employ imaginative strategies to interest pupils such as role play and games that bring learning to life. For example, in one effective writing lesson, two pupils conducted an entertaining interview about 'flying toads', filmed by another pupil, to illustrate how reporting can be subjective.
- Teachers are skilled at planning work that matches the abilities of all pupils in their classes and they have high expectations of what they can achieve. These precise activities ensure that the work is hard enough even for the most able. However, at times, there are not enough opportunities for pupils to learn independently by extending the activities for themselves and evaluate how well they have done.
- Reading, writing, communication and mathematics are taught effectively and pupils have good opportunities to develop their speaking and listening skills in lessons. Increasingly, the curriculum provides ways for pupils to apply immediately their new learning. In a good phonics lesson (the knowledge of letters and the sounds they make) observed during the inspection, pupils were able to create high-quality sentences using the new words they had just learnt to read.
- Marking and feedback provide pupils with clear information on how well they are doing. Teachers are skilled in assessing how well pupils are learning throughout the lesson and adapt the activities for better effect.
- The recently introduced pupil premium and the allocation for special educational needs have been used to support smaller teaching groups, well led by teaching assistants. Also, the introduction of activities aimed to improve pupils' emotional well-being and self-esteem are

helping to ensure that all pupils engage productively in their learning and are included successfully in lessons.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Behaviour in and around the school is outstanding because of the very effective relationships that exist between adults and pupils. In lessons, pupils sustain their concentration for extended periods and are very motivated to succeed.
- Pupils, parents and carers, and staff are overwhelmingly positive about behaviour in the school. Typically, pupils are friendly, open and have excellent manners. They are respectful of each other and listen to each other's viewpoints with tolerance and sensitivity.
- Pupils are very clear that there is no bullying in the school, although they are aware of the forms that this can take such as name-calling and racist bullying. They have complete confidence in staff to sort out any minor incidents that may occur and so feel very safe. Parents and carers support this view.
- Pupils are very proud of their school and would recommend it unreservedly. They are encouraged to play an active part in school life and are involved in an impressive range of roles and responsibilities, from friendship leaders to recycling monitors.
- Behaviour is managed extremely well, especially in the way the school supports pupils who are emotionally more fragile. Carefully tailored support programmes help them to become more resilient and confident as learners.
- The school has taken concerted steps to raise attendance rates. The significant improvement in attendance means that it is now well above the national average with good levels of punctuality.

The leadership and management are good

- The new headteacher has imbued the whole school community with a renewed sense of high ambition and purpose. Quickly gaining everyone's confidence over the last year, she has set about implementing effective strategies to improve teaching and learning which are having good impact. These developments demonstrate the school's good capacity to improve.
- Although the local authority has taken a light-touch approach to the school, good support from their consultants over the last year has helped to develop the skills of the new leadership team. Monitoring has become more extensive with all senior staff taking an active role in this, giving effective feedback to teachers so that they can improve their work. Good programmes of training and support are ensuring that teachers' performance is developed well.
- The improvements to the way pupils' attainment and progress are assessed and monitored has enabled the school's leaders to judge the effect of new initiatives and hold teachers to account more readily.
- Literacy is well led and managed with the introduction of more systematic and precisely targeted teaching of both reading and writing. This is helping to close the gap in boys' achievement.
- The curriculum is evolving continually to meet the needs of the pupils at the school and engage their interest. There is a great breadth to the provision of enrichment activities and extra-curricular opportunities that contribute to the outstanding personal development and behaviour of pupils. However, the use of new technology by pupils in lessons is more limited and the school is aware of the need to address this imbalance.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well; especially in the way pupils are encouraged to develop their skills of leadership and cooperation. Tolerance and respect are promoted as part of the school's commitment to equality.
- All statutory requirements for safeguarding pupils are met and managed efficiently. The school ensures that all staff training is up to date and is vigilant about maintaining the security of the site and the welfare of pupils.

■ **The governance of the school:**

Governors are very experienced and knowledgeable about the school. This is because they make frequent visits to monitor all aspects of the school's work and consequently can hold the senior leaders to account, as well as being supportive of the new leadership team. They keep up to date with their training through the local authority. They have a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the teaching and learning and how the school's performance compares to other schools nationally. They are well informed about the ways in which the performance of staff is being managed and how this is aligned to their pay progression. The pupil premium has been accounted for efficiently in terms of allocation and the impact on pupils' attainment.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	114336
Local authority	Devon Council
Inspection number	401368

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	161
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Lucy Meardon
Headteacher	Zoe Batten
Date of previous school inspection	22–23 March 2010
Telephone number	01237 475276
Fax number	01237 476445
Email address	admin@ash-sch.org

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