

# St Helen's Primary School

Colne Road, Bluntisham, Huntingdon, PE28 3NY

## Inspection dates

21–22 February 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Too few pupils make good progress because the teaching is not consistently good.
- Pupils do not practise their literacy skills enough in science and topic work.
- Children in Reception do not make good progress because adults miss opportunities to extend their learning through probing questioning, especially when children are choosing activities for themselves.
- Teachers do not always make enough use of teaching assistants when introducing learning.
- Pupils' progress sometimes slows down because they are not given hard enough work to do, especially if they are more able.
- The rate of improvement has not been fast enough because senior leaders have taken on too much rather than focusing on a few priorities.
- Governors have not been active enough in challenging the school about its performance.

### The school has the following strengths

- More pupils made good progress in writing and mathematics in Key Stage 2 last year as a result of new approaches to teaching.
- Marking has improved because the new policy is being carried out well and pupils are taking a pride in their work.
- There are good opportunities for pupils to do well in art, music and sport.
- Pupils behave well and say they feel safe at school, a view shared by parents.
- Subject leaders have become more effective since the last inspection.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspection team observed 16 lessons or parts of lessons, many of which were joint observations with the headteacher.
- The inspectors heard pupils read, attended two assemblies, and, with the headteacher, looked closely at examples of pupils' work.
- The inspection team looked at a wide range of school documents, including development plans, policies, self-evaluation reports, monitoring files, safeguarding and curriculum materials, evidence of the school's partnership work and information for families.
- Meetings were held with pupils chosen at random. Discussions were held with the deputy headteacher, class teachers, the Chair and Vice Chair of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority.
- The inspectors took account of the 46 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View), two letters from parents and spoke with several parents in the playground.
- The inspection team considered 11 staff questionnaires.

## Inspection team

Nick Butt, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Lynn Lowery

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- Almost all pupils are from White British backgrounds.
- A below-average proportion of pupils are known to be eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for children in local authority care, those known to be eligible for free school meals and pupils with a parent in the armed forces.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is above average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for progress and standards in English and mathematics.
- The school does not make use of any alternative provision for its pupils off site.
- There is a privately run pre-school sharing the school building, which did not form part of this inspection.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that it is consistently good or better by making sure that:
  - all teachers set work at the right level, especially for more-able pupils
  - pupils have every chance to practise their literacy skills in science and topic work
  - teachers make best use of teaching assistants, especially during introductions to learning
  - adults take every opportunity to enhance children's learning in Reception, especially when children are selecting their own activities.
- Increase the pace of school development by making sure that:
  - senior leaders focus in depth on tackling the school's key priorities for improvement
  - governors hold leaders fully to account for the school's performance.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- Pupils do not make good enough progress because teaching is not consistently good. In particular, more-able pupils do not always reach the higher levels of attainment of which they are capable, because at times they are given work to do that is too easy for them.
- In some classes pupils do not do enough writing in subjects other than English, such as science and topic work. This means they do not have enough chance to practise their literacy skills in different situations and their progress slows.
- Pupils join Reception with a wide range of abilities that are broadly average. Standards remain broadly average at the end of Key Stage 1 and when pupils leave the school at the end of Key Stage 2. Pupils' progress does not speed up as much as it should, because teachers do not always place sufficient demands on them.
- There has been some improvement in Key Stage 2 in writing because of a focus on developing factual accounts and because the quality of feedback from teachers has improved. There has also been an emphasis on improving presentation and pupils' handwriting is much neater than it used to be.
- Pupils are being encouraged to explain their thinking in mathematics, and this is speeding up their progress. They are also being taught to use mathematical terms more readily and encouraged to learn their times tables. Displays in classrooms with handy hints and prompts for learning are helping pupils to find things out for themselves and to work more independently.
- In response to disappointing results in last year's Year 1 reading check, staff have worked hard to improve pupils' understanding of phonics (the sounds that letters make). Older pupils have had more opportunities to read with their teacher or to undertake reading tasks on their own. The school's progress information shows that standards in reading are rising and that the present Year 1 are on course to meet the standards expected for their age this year.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs achieve successfully because they receive targeted support from teaching assistants and their progress is followed closely. Pupils with dyslexia are particularly well catered for. However, when pupils are working with the rest of the class, sometimes the work is not adapted well enough for them to do their best.
- The progress of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is improving. Additional funding goes on one-to-one tuition and the chance to take part in clubs and visits. As a result, pupils known to be eligible for free school meals keep up with their peers and the gap in attainment in English and mathematics is closing. They do better than similar pupils nationally.

### The quality of teaching requires improvement

- Not enough teaching is consistently good. Teachers do not always keep a close enough eye on how well pupils are doing so that they can reshape their teaching and speed up the progress of all pupils. At times the work is either too easy or too difficult for pupils so that they are at risk of either becoming bored or frustrated.
- Teaching in Reception requires improvement because adults do not do enough to extend

learning when children are selecting their own activities. Not all the activities have enough purpose, and adults sometimes miss opportunities to draw out children's understanding through skilful questioning.

- Where the teaching is good, especially in Years 4 and 5, there is a brisk pace to learning and activities have a real-life purpose. For example, pupils in Year 5 enjoyed responding to a letter complaining that there was too much sport on television. They quickly identified the features of persuasive writing and used them successfully in creating their own letters.
- Sometimes learning slows because the teacher talks for too long, especially during introductions, and teaching assistants are not used as well as they could be, for example to use questioning to extend more-able pupils' thinking or to give extra prompts to support those who are less able.
- The teaching of art, sport and music is good. There are examples of high quality artwork in the public spaces, including studies around a well-known painting of parasols by Renoir. Pupils take part in a wide range of sports and musical activities, and this promotes their spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness well.
- The quality of marking has improved. All teachers give pupils next steps in learning and the chance to act upon them. The presentation of pupils' work is good and there is evidence in books that progress is speeding up this year as a result of actions taken by leaders to improve teaching.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils** are good

- Pupils behave well and are keen to learn. Behaviour has improved since the last inspection. Pupils say that there is no bullying and that they feel safe in school. Parents who responded to Parent View were very positive about pupils' behaviour.
- Pupils show respect to one another and collaborate well in class. They are courteous to adults and move around the school sensibly. At playtimes they cooperate in games and share the equipment.
- Pupils have a good understanding of different types of bullying such as racist name calling and cyber bullying. They feel confident that if they had a problem adults would sort it out. They understand the school's system of rewards and sanctions, although some pupils and parents feel it is a little harsh for pupils not to be able to 'win back' golden time through improved behaviour once they have forfeited it.
- Pupils know about how to keep safe on the internet, and how to stay safe when out and about. They learn how to keep safe when cycling.
- Pupils readily take on responsibilities such as being members of the school council and raising money for charity. The older pupils enjoy looking after the younger ones during lunch times.
- Attendance is above average, reflecting pupils' good enjoyment of school.

### **The leadership and management** requires improvement

- The rate of improvement since the last inspection has not been rapid enough to make all teaching consistently good or to secure and sustain good progress for all pupils. Leaders have

given themselves many different targets to reach and have not focused enough on a few key ones for maximum impact.

- Senior leaders have not always acted decisively enough in the past when weaknesses have emerged, especially in the quality of teaching. Effective systems to check how well the school is doing have been set up so that senior leaders now have an accurate view of the school and know what needs to improve.
- Subject leaders have developed their roles since the last inspection and have a good understanding of where the strengths and areas to improve lie. They can point to actions that have led to improvements this year in reading, writing and mathematics in particular. Subject leaders undertake regular checks on learning in their areas and give useful feedback to staff. They do their best to make sure that all pupils have equal opportunities in learning.
- Subjects and topics are taught in creative ways that often interest pupils and bring learning to life. For example, pupils in Years 1 and 2 recreated the Great Fire of London by burning their models of half-timbered houses in a suitably catastrophic conflagration on the school playground. Themed days and weeks contribute to pupils' enjoyment of learning, as do visits and visitors. During the inspection, pupils were delighted to receive a visit from a Punch and Judy show. These experiences develop pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding well.
- The school fosters good relations with parents and the community. Parents are very positive about the school's work and help out with clubs and in class. They attend workshops on aspects of their children's learning so that they can become more involved in supporting their education.
- The local authority provides good support for the school and an appropriate level of challenge, especially in tackling teaching that is not good enough.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - The governing body knows that the quality of teaching requires improvement, but has not challenged leaders enough to make the changes necessary to secure consistently good teaching. Governors know how well pupils are doing and how this compares with all schools nationally. They are aware of the targets that are set to improve teaching and what the school does to reward good teaching, although not enough is being done to tackle underperformance. Governors visit the school and ask questions but do not drive improvement sufficiently. They keep a close eye on the budget and know what the pupil premium is being spent on and the effect this is having on pupils' progress. They make sure that safeguarding arrangements keep pupils safe.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	110888
<b>Local authority</b>	Cambridgeshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	405310

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Foundation
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	204
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Gary James
<b>Headteacher</b>	Kay Potter
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	29 March 2011
<b>Telephone number</b>	01487 841468
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