

St Helen's Primary School

Durham Street, Hartlepool, County Durham, TS24 0HG

Inspection dates 27–28 February 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		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Since the previous inspection, achievement, teaching and leadership and management have all improved as a result of the strong leadership from the senior team supported by other leaders and the governing body.
- From a well below starting point when they join the school, pupils make good progress to reach broadly average standards. This represents good achievement.
- Staff have a detailed knowledge of how well pupils are doing and give extra support to those who need it. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are supported well.
- Teaching is good and is sometimes outstanding. It is particularly strong in Years 5 and 6.
- Around the school and in lessons, pupils behave well. They are always polite and courteous and are very proud of their school. They feel safe, enjoy learning and always try hard to do their best.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- There is not enough outstanding teaching across the school.
- In some lessons, pupils do not have enough opportunities to find things out for themselves.
- In a few lessons in Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2, planning does not always meet the needs of all pupils. This sometimes results in work that is too easy for some and too hard for others.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 22 lessons, two of which were joint observations with the headteacher. Inspectors also heard pupils read in Years 1 and 2 and in Years 5 and 6.
- They took account of 19 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) and to 30 questionnaires completed by staff.
- They held meetings with two groups of pupils, including members of the school council, four members of the governing body and two representatives of the local authority. They also had discussions with leaders at different levels including the leader of the Early Years Foundation Stage and the special educational needs coordinator.
- Inspectors observed the school at work and looked at a range of documentation, including internal and external data relating to pupils' progress, pupils' workbooks, school improvement planning and the school's procedures for gaining an accurate view of its own performance. They also considered minutes of governing body meetings, reports written by the local authority and safeguarding and child protection documents.

Inspection team

Peter Eeva, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Angela James

Additional Inspector

Barbara Waugh

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a larger than average sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, those who are looked after by the local authority or from service families is well above average.
- The majority of pupils are White British and there are few who speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action is above average.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is average.
- The school meets 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?

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching by making sure that:
 - teachers use information about pupils' progress to plan work at precisely the right level to help them, particularly those who are more-able, achieve the very best they can
 - pupils have sufficient opportunities to find things out for themselves
 - the best classroom practice is shared more consistently across the school.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children enter the Nursery class with skills, knowledge and understanding that are well below those typical for their age. They make good progress to reach standards that are just below those seen nationally by the time they enter Year 1. Children make a good start in recognising the sounds that letters make.
- Good progress continues in Key Stage 1 and pupils use their increasing knowledge of letters and sounds to develop their skills in reading. They accurately sound out unfamiliar words and understand and enjoy what they read. The standard of reading is above average for pupils of their age.
- There is good progress in Key Stage 2 and pupils leave with standards that are similar to those seen nationally, although standards in writing are not as high as in reading. The proportion of pupils who make more than expected progress has improved since the previous inspection.
- Pupils extend their learning well through the use of computers.
- Inspection evidence supports the school's data, which indicates that pupils are on track to attain above average standards by the end of the summer term 2013.
- Some pupils, especially the more able, do not always make as much progress as they should because the work planned for them is sometimes too easy or too hard.
- Pupils known to be eligible for free school meals make good progress and the gap between their performance and the performance of other pupils in the school has narrowed, in part because of the extra help provided for them through pupil premium funding. For example, some pupils benefit from learning with teaching assistants in small groups or individually for some of the time
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs achieve as well as other groups, as a result of the planning and good support put in place to help them.

The quality of teaching is good

- The quality of teaching is good overall and is sometimes outstanding
- The detailed tracking and thorough monitoring of pupils' progress means that teachers plan interesting lessons which enthuse pupils. However, they do not always make the work hard enough for some pupils; it can also be too easy for others and this slows their learning.
- The assessment of pupils' progress and attainment is generally accurate and is based on a detailed knowledge of the performance of each pupil.
- Teaching assistants and other adults are deployed well and have a good understanding of the needs of different pupils. As a result, they support their learning purposefully.
- Pupils and teachers have strong working relationships. Pupils typically say, 'Teachers really help us learn.'
- Teachers make good use of topics to enthuse and motivate pupils to learn. For example, a Year 6 class worked enthusiastically to create and present an argument in favour of aid following a natural disaster.
- Marking is regular and usually encourages and informs pupils about how well they have done and what they could do to improve. In many cases, pupils respond well to these suggestions.
- In some lessons, pupils have opportunities to learn on their own but sometimes their learning is too controlled by the teacher and, as a result, some pupils do not learn as quickly as they might.
- Where the work is planned at exactly the right level, pupils make very good progress. For example, in a mathematics lesson where pupils solved problems using calculators, pupils said how much they enjoyed the lesson because it really challenged them.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils behave well around school and during play. They also behave well in lessons because they are interested in what they are learning.
- All pupils know, through assemblies and lessons that it is important to care for, and treat everybody, the same. As a result, from the Nursery class onwards there is a very supportive and caring feel to the school.
- Pupils take on responsibilities, such as librarians and monitors, and are conscientious in carrying out their duties. Those responsible for order and safety in the dining hall ensured that inspectors were very well catered for at lunchtime.
- Pupils feel safe in school and parents agree. Pupils say this is because the school works hard to keep them safe.
- Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep safe in a range of situations and they have a keen knowledge about how to keep themselves safe on the internet.
- Pupils and parents say there is little bullying and pupils are confident that it is dealt with quickly. Any instances are first dealt with by the school council and it rarely has to go beyond that stage and involve adults. Pupils are aware of the different forms that bullying can take.
- Attendance is average and has improved as a result of the school's thorough procedures for checking and following up any absences.
- Pupils benefit from a rich curriculum and a wide range of after-school and lunchtime clubs. They particularly enjoy the outdoor activities events and the gardening club. These activities contribute to their good behaviour because pupils are very interested in what they are doing and value the opportunities given to them.

The leadership and management are good

- The school is well led by a determined and effective headteacher supported by an equally committed deputy headteacher and other leaders at different levels who are rapidly developing their skills as they become more experienced in their roles.
- Leaders recognise where the best classroom practice is but this is not routinely shared across the school.
- Staff performance targets support improvements in teaching. Staff have access to a wide range of training and, as a result, are able to keep up to date with developments in teaching and improve their skills. They are not awarded pay rises unless their performance over time shows that they have met their targets.
- Thorough tracking and pupil progress meetings show where there are gaps in pupils' achievement and where pupils fall behind staff take prompt action to help them catch up.
- Procedures to check on the school's performance are thorough and have resulted in effective plans for development. For example, recent actions have resulted in improvements in writing.
- There are many opportunities for pupils to develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding and these are strengths of the school. The variety of visits and the visitors to school related to topics are much appreciated by the pupils who have real subjects to write about.
- All staff are committed to promoting equality of opportunity and all pupils have equal access to the curriculum and to the different lunchtime and after-school clubs and activities. Discrimination in all its forms is not tolerated.
- Safeguarding and child protection policies and practice meet current requirements.
- The local authority is providing appropriate support and advice which is valued by the school. The school is beginning to use its links with other schools to strengthen skills in teaching.
- Improvements in the achievement of pupils, the quality of teaching and leadership and management indicate that there is clear capacity for further improvement.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Governors are actively involved in planning improvement and are ambitious for the achievement and welfare of all the pupils. They are well informed about all aspects of the school and in particular about the quality of teaching and data in relation to pupils' achievement. Where teachers need to improve their teaching, governors make sure that they have access to appropriate professional development. The senior leadership team are regularly challenged in relation to the targets that have been set. Governors are familiar with the Teachers' Standards and use them to help manage teachers' performance. They want the school to become outstanding and actively support the school in its improvement. The governing body oversees the arrangements for the spending of pupil premium funding and is aware of the positive impact of this spending on pupils' achievement.

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	111605
Local authority	Hartlepool
Inspection number	405344

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	303
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Hammond
Headteacher	Vivienne Ingleton
Date of previous school inspection	5 May 2011
Telephone number	01429 267038
Fax number	01429 274377
Email address	admin.sthelens@schools.hartlepool.gov.uk

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