

St Helen Auckland Community Primary

Manor Road, St Helen Auckland, Bishop Auckland, County Durham, DL14 9EN

Inspection dates 19–20 November 2014

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The headteacher provides excellent leadership to ensure that the school provides a calm, purposeful environment in which every pupil feels valued and able to succeed.
- All pupils make at least good progress regardless of their starting points. Their attainment is rising year on year; by Year 6 pupils reach standards that are in line with the national average.
- Teaching is good, because teachers know their pupils well and plan activities so that pupils of all abilities are able to succeed in lessons. This motivates pupils to work hard to please their teachers, and to see how well they can do.
- Children in the Nursery and Reception classes make good progress in their learning because they are exceptionally well cared for and quickly develop the confidence to explore and learn for themselves.
- Pupils' behaviour is excellent; it creates a warm, supportive place to learn and make new friends. Pupils are taught from an early age to support one another's learning so that all succeed.
- Pupils say they feel safe, and they are safe in school. Excellent pastoral care from adults ensures that all pupils know where to turn for help if they need it. Older pupils follow the excellent example set by adults in the way they care for younger pupils.
- The curriculum is well planned to provide opportunities for pupils to make choices about their learning and follow their interests. They are given scope to develop independence and make decisions about what and how they learn.
- Senior and middle leaders work effectively together to improve the school. All staff share a commitment to making the school the best it can be by contributing to developments.
- Governors are very well informed about teaching and learning in the school. They are fully committed to the headteacher's vision for an outstanding school and go to some lengths to involve the community in the school's work.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Pupils in Years 1 and 2 do not make the same rapid progress in reading as older pupils because they do not have frequent opportunities to consolidate their skills by reading with an adult.
- Leadership and management are not outstanding overall. Recent strategies to boost the school's improvement need time to bed in before they raise pupils' achievement even further.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed fifteen lessons or parts of lessons, two of which were jointly observed with the headteacher and the deputy headteacher.
- Discussions were held with members of the governing body, senior and middle leaders, staff and pupils.
- Inspectors observed the school at work, and looked at a range of documentation, including that relating to the school’s safeguarding policies and procedures, information about pupils’ progress and attainment, the school’s evaluation of its own performance and the school development plan.
- Inspectors examined pupils’ work on display and in their exercise and homework books, and listened to groups of pupils read.
- There were insufficient responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, so inspectors took account of the school’s recent survey of parents’ views. They also took account of 23 questionnaires returned by staff.

Inspection team

Moira Fitzpatrick, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Julie Deville

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium is high. (The pupil premium provides additional funding to support disadvantaged pupils, including those known to be eligible for free school meals and pupils looked after by the local authority.)
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is above average.
- The vast majority of pupils are from White British heritage; the proportion who speak English as an additional language is below average.
- The school met the government's floor standards in 2013. These are the minimum expectations for attainment and progress in English and mathematics at the end of Year 6.
- Children attend the nursery part time.
- There have been some staffing changes in recent years, after a long period of stability.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further improve the reading skills of pupils at the end of Year 2 by:
 - providing daily opportunities for pupils to read with an adult so their understanding and enjoyment of what they read increases
 - ensuring that pupils are encouraged to recognise important features of the stories they read so that this helps their writing skills to develop faster.
- Improve leadership and management to outstanding by:
 - further developing the role of senior and middle leaders in monitoring the school's work so that a more detailed and comprehensive picture of strengths and areas for development is gathered
 - sharing the best practice to support teachers and increase the amount of outstanding teaching and learning in the school
 - ensuring that leaders have enough time during the school day to carry out their monitoring and action planning activities.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher provides excellent leadership to establish outstanding pastoral care for pupils. Her steely determination to ensure that pupils' behaviour is always of the highest quality, so that all pupils can do their best, is fully supported by all staff. The school's ambition for high achievement for pupils is extremely well supported by a caring ethos and the excellent systems for managing pupils' behaviour. These, together with the development of teachers' skills, have contributed to the year-on-year rise in the school's performance since the previous inspection.
- Leaders and managers at all levels demonstrate a determination to improve the school. Leaders regularly check on the school's performance and their assessment of its effectiveness accurately drives further improvement. However, the school recognises that more frequent monitoring by middle and senior leaders will provide a more precise picture of what the priorities might be.
- Since the previous inspection there has been an increase in the proportion of pupils making expected and more than expected progress, and gaps between the performance of different groups of pupils has reduced. Attendance has improved for all groups. It is now at the national average because of the excellent partnership the school has developed with parents.
- Good systems to check pupils' learning help staff to quickly spot any slowing in progress. Regular meetings between teachers and senior leaders identify pupils who need extra support or challenge to maintain a good rate of progress over time. This supports the school's excellent commitment to equal opportunities.
- Staff performance is well managed with clear targets and priorities. Staff understand their accountability for the progress of their pupils. Good teamwork, professional dialogue and a shared determination to get the best for every pupil ensure school-wide support for improvement. Responses to staff questionnaires show that morale is high across the school.
- The curriculum is well planned to foster pupils' interests through a thematic approach. The school makes use of its links with a school in Tanzania to give pupils a broader view of the world, while stressing the multi-cultural nature of their own society. Through this approach, pupils learn to understand and tolerate life styles different to their own. They recognise how many privileges they enjoy compared with others in the world, and are keen fund raisers to support their partner school - Mahoma Primary.
- Additional funding for sport is used very well to increase pupils' participation in sport and to enhance their understanding of how to stay fit and healthy. The school has extended its competitive activities through its network of cluster schools and has appointed a local athlete to take part in physical education lessons and act as a role model for pupils and staff.
- Pupil premium funds are well used to support disadvantaged pupils to make the same good progress as their peers in school. Additional support for families through the parent support adviser, which has improved the attendance of disadvantaged pupils, along with one-to-one learning support and special homework clubs are some of the ways the school is narrowing the gap in attainment between these pupils and others in school and nationally.
- The school's links with parents are highly supportive and encourage parents to be involved in their children's learning, for example through the learning logs that all pupils use. Parents hold the school in high esteem and are pleased that their views are sought and listened to.
- The local authority provides effective, light-touch support for this successful school.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are well informed about the school's performance, the quality of teaching and its priorities for improvement. They visit the school regularly to monitor its work, and undertake training to enable them to challenge and support the school to maintain its overall effectiveness. Governors know how the pupil premium is used to support the pupils for whom it is intended, to achieve as well as other pupils. They support improvements to teaching by holding teachers to account for the progress their pupils make and link this to appropriate salary progression. Finances are well managed to ensure good staffing levels to support pupils' learning. Governors ensure that safeguarding policies and procedures meet statutory requirements.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding**Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding both in and out of the classroom. Pupils look after one another very well by following the excellent example set by all staff in the school. They play together very well, with older pupils looking after younger ones in the playground by organising and sharing toys and looking out for children who may have no one to play with.
- Pupils' excellent attitude to learning mean that time is used well in lessons. They listen closely, are keen to volunteer answers and make a prompt start with their work. They are resilient and keep going till they succeed, because they trust their teachers and teaching assistants to spot if they need help. Pupils take great pride in pleasing their teachers by their hard work.
- Pupils are taught to understand the need for tolerance both in their school and the wider community. Their links with a school in Tanzania have opened their eyes to the differences between cultures and beliefs. They quickly learn to uphold British values of fairness and tolerance, and the rules that everyone has to abide by. This is evident in the harmonious, happy atmosphere around the school.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. Staff are well trained to spot any changes in pupils' mood and performance. Pupils have absolute trust in adults to keep them safe and secure.
- Pastoral care is excellent. It creates a very happy, secure school where all pupils are able to get on with their learning and feel successful. Staff are particularly alert to pupils who have emotional or behavioural difficulties and have developed skilful ways of managing their behaviour so it does not disrupt the learning of others. There are rigorous systems to investigate concerns promptly and provide appropriate support.
- Pupils are well taught to assess risks to their well-being from an early age because the school has a well-planned programme of activities, including regular visits from the police, to alert them to possible risks. They are taught to tell the difference between 'bullying, a squabble and letting off steam'. They know about the risks of the internet and know that the school gives both them and their parents a good understanding of these risks and how to avoid them.
- The school has worked hard to improve attendance since the previous inspection. It has improved well and is now at the national average.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is good and some is outstanding. Senior leaders have planned more regular monitoring of teaching to share the best practice and increase the proportion that is outstanding.
- Pupils of all ages are expected to work hard in lessons and to support each other's learning. This ensures they make good or better progress to reach the targets set for their learning. Year 4 pupils relished the challenges set by the teacher for their work on the symmetry of shapes. Each ability group worked at a rapid pace because the teacher had set tasks which were within their capabilities, and pupils helped one another's understanding of the different shapes. For example, the most able pupils held some interesting discussion about how to find a line of symmetry on some national flags. Pupils were completely absorbed by their tasks, responded quickly to any advice from the teacher and teaching assistant and were delighted with their efforts by the end of the lesson, when all had made good or better progress.
- Skilful questioning by teachers allows them to assess how well pupils' understanding is developing in lessons. For example, Year 5 pupils were very well prepared to write a letter to persuade the teacher to reconsider cancelling the school trip because of the teacher's questions on what features of language would be useful in writing this kind of letter. By using the pupils' ideas to demonstrate how such a letter would look, the teacher prepared them very well for independent writing, at which they were all successful.
- Lessons are well structured to match the age and stage of pupils' learning. Year 1 pupils made good progress in consolidating their knowledge of letter and sounds, because the teacher ensured all pupils could see and say these as they flashed onto the screen. Next, the teacher's careful demonstration of how to write simple words into a sentence, gave pupils a good model on which to build their independent writing, so that pupils of all abilities were able to complete the task and feel very proud of their hard work.
- Homework is a high spot of learning for many pupils, because they are given scope to plan and find out for themselves from the broad guidelines set by teachers. The main thrust of learning for pupils of all ages is to develop literacy and numerous skills and allow pupils to follow their own interests. Learning logs in all classrooms are filled with a huge amount of information about every topic that interests the pupils. Work is beautifully presented and these homework books are highly valued by pupils, parents and teachers.

- Well-trained teaching assistants give good support to help pupils work independently by spotting where their effort slows and moving in to help pupils over any obstacle. This ensures that all pupils are able to make similar progress in lessons.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils' achievement is good, because all groups make good progress from their different starting points. There is a rising trend of attainment at the end of Year 6 because all pupils make the progress expected of them from the end of Year 2 in reading, writing and mathematics. The proportion making more than expected progress was below the national average in reading and mathematics and equal to the national average in writing in 2013.
- The proportion of Year 1 pupils reaching the expected standard in phonics (the sounds that letters make) in 2013 was at the national average; this year's results have risen to keep pace with the national figure. Pupils make good progress to the end of Year 2, and results in 2013 showed a steep rise in pupils' attainment over the previous year. This too has been sustained in the current year in reading, writing and mathematics.
- In 2013 the proportion of Year 6 pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics was slightly above the national average, but a smaller than average proportion reached the higher level in mathematics. This represents good progress from the different starting points of this group of pupils.
- Reading skills are well taught from Reception year onwards so that children quickly develop early reading skills. These are especially well consolidated in Years 3 to 6 where pupils have daily sessions in guided and group reading. This accelerates their reading skills and develops a genuine love of reading. Older pupils are able to talk about their reading preferences and which authors they particularly like. In Years 1 and 2, where guided reading is not a daily feature of learning, pupils' progress is not as rapid as it is for older pupils, nor does their writing develop as quickly.
- A recent emphasis on improving pupils' knowledge and recall of numbers has given pupils the ability to apply their mathematical knowledge skilfully to solving problems. Well-planned, practical activities are helping pupils of all ages to find success, develop confidence and enjoy the subject. Many older pupils spoke of the pleasure they get from doing 'really hard' work in mathematics lessons.
- A focus on developing pupils' speaking and listening is having a notable effect on the quality of their writing, because their talk around ideas for writing helps to extend their vocabulary and decide the best way to express ideas. This, together with the many opportunities that pupils have to write throughout the day, is producing some high-quality writing of which pupils are rightly proud. The school has targeted improving handwriting and presentation skills this year, so that the quality of these matches the content of pupils' writing.
- The most able pupils are set tasks that engage and challenge their thinking. They are expected to work independently and co-operatively to solve problems, so their learning speeds up as they learn from one another. Teachers are adept at developing their thinking through probing questions. The proportion of pupils exceeding the expected level for their age is increasing year on year as a result of the school's development of these strategies.
- Pupils who are disabled or have special educational needs are very well supported by well-trained assistants and teachers' careful planning of work that helps them to succeed as well as others in the class. Teachers and teaching assistants are vigilant when pupils are working and quickly move alongside to support if they notice any slowing in progress.
- Pupil premium funds have been used well to support disadvantaged pupils. The gap in attainment between disadvantaged pupils and others in the school has reduced significantly in reading, writing and mathematics. This group of pupils now make the same good progress as their peers in school from their starting points and similar progress to other pupils nationally. The attainment of disadvantaged pupils is equal to their peers in school, and approximately one term behind all pupils nationally.

The early years provision is good

- Children join the nursery with skills that are below those typical for their age. By the end of their Reception year all children have made good progress from their starting points. The proportion of children reaching a good level of development is at the national average and rising year on year. Children are well prepared for Year 1 with good personal and social skills and good levels of confidence to explore and find

out for themselves.

- The learning environment is well planned to provide interesting experiences in all areas of learning indoors and outdoors. In the current year, children in their Reception year are making rapid progress in their literacy and numeracy skills. Teaching is very effective because it is based on a good knowledge of how well children are progressing. This was clear in a lesson on letters and sounds where the teacher's questions helped children to think hard and join in with explanations so they all learned at a good pace.
- Teachers' planning makes sure that children are presented with plenty of opportunities to consolidate their early literacy and numeracy skills, as when groups of boys searched outdoors for number clues to where 'the aliens' had landed. The teaching assistant's skilful questioning helped them to keep on searching and find new ways of looking for clues.
- Leadership and management are highly effective in ensuring that children feel safe and are safe, through rigorous systems which are reviewed regularly. Children's excellent behaviour and their willingness to share show how well staff have established high expectations and good routines. Parents are encouraged to support their children's learning and feel welcome when they stay to read and play with their children at the start of the session.

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	114104
Local authority	Durham
Inspection number	448755

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	166
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Cannon Father Robert McTeer
Headteacher	Mrs Maeve MacKenzie
Date of previous school inspection	23 November 2009
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