

# St Helen's Primary School

Colne Road, Bluntisham, Huntingdon, PE28 3NY

**Inspection dates** 11–12 February 2015

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
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 executive headteacher and head of school have brought about good improvements in achievement and teaching.
- The recently established federation with another school is helping to raise standards.
- Pupils are now making good progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Teaching is consistently good. Well-planned lessons capture pupils' enthusiasm, making them eager to learn.
- Pupils are enthusiastic, friendly and caring. They feel safe, and their behaviour in and out of class is good.
- Governors support the school well. They are very knowledgeable about the school and about what needs to be done in order to improve it further.
- The local authority has worked closely with leaders to provide a high-quality education for the pupils.
- Children in the Reception class get off to a good start because of the interesting and engaging range of activities provided.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The level of challenge for the most-able pupils is not as high in mathematics as it is in English, and fewer of these pupils reach the higher levels than is the case in reading and writing.
- The school provides many opportunities for pupils to develop spiritually, morally and socially however there is insufficient opportunities to learn about other cultures or political issues nationally, and thereby gain a full understanding of life in modern Britain.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 16 lessons. Two observations were joint visits with a member of the senior leadership team. Inspectors talked to pupils, and looked at their work and records of their progress.
- Inspectors held meetings with pupils, representatives of the governing body, a local authority representative and school staff including senior leaders, subject leaders, teachers and non-teachers.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read and observed them at play during break times and at lunchtime.
- Inspectors looked at a wide range of school documents, including: the school's self-evaluation: the school's own information on pupils' recent and current progress; the school development plan; monitoring files; and behaviour and attendance records. The school's safeguarding policies were also scrutinised.
- Inspectors took account of the 72 responses to Ofsted's Parent View questionnaire and parents' responses to the school's own questionnaires. They also considered the 26 responses to the staff questionnaire.

## Inspection team

Patricia Hunt, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Dominic Carver

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school. The school entered into a formal federation with Holywell CE Primary School in July 2014. The two schools share the same governing body, Executive Headteacher and also a number of subject leaders.
- Most pupils are White British.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils eligible for the pupil premium is below average. The pupil premium is extra funding to support pupils in local authority care and those known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have 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.

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

- Increase the level of challenge and support provided for all pupils in mathematics, especially for the most able, so that more reach the higher levels.
- Provide more opportunities in the curriculum for pupils to learn about other cultures, and political and social issues, to prepare them for life in modern Britain.

## Inspection judgements

### The leadership and management are good

- The executive headteacher and head of school have rapidly improved the quality of teaching so that pupils' progress is good and improving. They set high expectations for pupils' achievement and make regular checks on their progress and attainment.
- Staff agree that senior leaders provide a clear direction for the school and that this helps them to know how to improve their teaching.
- The formal federation of St Helen's and Holywell C.E. Primary has been a key reason for the school's rapid improvement. The executive headteacher has made good use of this link to introduce outstanding practice into the school and to drive up standards. The two schools share the subject leader for mathematics and the special educational needs coordinator. This is proving to be a very effective use of staff resources as is shown by the recent improvements in teaching and in pupils' achievement.
- Monitoring of teaching is effective. Leaders look at pupils' work in books, carry out lesson observations systematically and analyse carefully the results of teachers' assessments. This gives them a clear understanding of where further improvements need to be made.
- Even though some are new in post at St Helen's, subject and other leaders are experienced and lead their areas of responsibility well. They provide good support and challenge for individual teachers and make sure that pupils are making good progress.
- The additional funding is used effectively to support disadvantaged pupils. The achievement of disadvantaged pupils by the end of Year 6 shows they do better than their peers in school and nationally. Leaders and governors regularly evaluate the effectiveness of how the money is spent.
- More pupils now take part in sporting activities as a result of the sports premium, and teachers are better able to teach physical education. The money is currently being used to develop the physical education curriculum in school and to further opportunities for all children to take part in inter-school competitions. The pupils confirm that they are able to experience a wider range of sporting activities in and out of school.
- The school's curriculum is broad and offers pupils many opportunities to widen their knowledge and experiences. Pupils speak fondly about the opportunities for outdoor learning and visits that extend their skills and knowledge. There are many opportunities to develop spiritual, moral and social development. Pupils showed in many lessons that they were able to reflect and empathise and recognise the difference between right and wrong. However, not enough emphasis is given to developing pupils' appreciation of different cultures nationally. This means that pupils are not as well prepared as they should be for life in modern British society.
- Parents are increasingly supportive of the new federation. Parents commented that, since the appointment of the executive headteacher, they receive useful information about their children and have a greater confidence that they are making good progress.
- The local authority supports the school well through effective guidance and support for leaders and managers in the school.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governors have an excellent understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. With leaders, they share the determined drive for the school to continue to improve rapidly. Governors are able to challenge and support the school effectively because of the wide range of skills they possess. Governors take part in training and are able to draw on the skills of the Chair of the Governing Body, who is a National Leader of Governance.
  - When making decisions about pay awards, the governing body ensures that any salary progression is related to pupils' progress. Governors manage the finances across the federation well and ensure that

pupil premium funding and the sports premium are used effectively. They frequently review the way this funding is spent.

- Governors ensure that safeguarding arrangements comply with statutory requirements and that policies are up to date. Together with leaders, they discharge these responsibilities well, ensuring that all pupils are safe at all times.

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

### **Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils show good manners and are considerate of others as they move around the school. They show a great deal of respect for adults and for each other in classes. Behaviour is not yet outstanding because not all pupils show a thirst for learning.
- In lessons, pupils settle to work quickly, concentrate hard and persevere well with their tasks. Pupils take a pride in their work and present it neatly in all subjects, particularly in their writing books.
- Pupils' say they are proud of their school. They particularly enjoy the opportunity to take part in the choir, individual music lessons and the range of sporting activities available to them.
- The school's records show there are few incidents of poor behaviour; any poor behaviour is dealt with well, without the need for exclusion.
- Attendance is in line with national averages. The school checks absences carefully and has introduced measures to support any pupils whose attendance or punctuality gives rise to concern.

### **Safety**

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils say they feel safe in school because adults look after them well.
- Arrangements for safeguarding and child protection meet current requirements. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe and they demonstrate knowledge of how to use the internet safely.
- Although bullying is rare, pupils say any bullying is dealt with effectively by staff.
- Parents confirm that their children are happy and safe in school.

## **The quality of teaching** is good

- The quality of teaching is now good because, with the support of the local authority, senior leaders have provided high-quality training to extend the skills of teachers and teaching assistants.
- Teachers' high expectations for pupils' learning were seen in most lessons visited and in the quality of their marking in pupils' books. Pupils receive clear feedback on how well they are doing and teachers' marking usually identifies for them the next steps they need to take to move their learning on.
- Teachers plan exciting lessons that engage and capture pupils' interests. Teachers plan together with their 'buddy' from Holywell CE Primary School. This has contributed to the significant improvement in the quality of teaching.
- Teachers use questioning effectively to probe pupils' thinking and to draw out further information and to clarify pupils' understanding. Pupils were observed asking questions and challenging their own knowledge and understanding. They were often able to articulate their thinking. This was seen many times, including in Year 5, where pupils were challenged to explain their reasoning in solving mathematical problems. This good practice is also evident in Reception, where adults' effective questioning in one session allowed

children to share their thoughts about Chinese New Year.

- Teaching assistants provide good support for learning throughout the school, including in the early years. This helps pupils who need extra help to make rapid progress and narrows any gaps in attainment between them and other pupils.
- Teachers promote pupils' enjoyment in reading well. The school provides a wide range of reading material which encourages pupils to read widely and often. The teaching of phonics (letters and the sounds they make) has improved since the previous inspection. Pupils confidently tackle unfamiliar words, using their knowledge of phonics to sound them out. In the early years, children confidently spell words such as 'teeth' and 'mouth' by using the spelling rules they have learnt.
- The work set for the most-able pupils in mathematics is sometimes too easy for them. Teachers do not all challenge these pupils enough in this subject or give them the extra support they need in order to reach the higher levels in the national tests.

### **The achievement of pupils** is good

- Children start in the Reception class with skills typical for their age. They are eager to learn and quickly make good progress. This is the result of activities that are well planned and which engage and motivate them.
- Progress over time has not been quite so fast in Years 1 and 2, but it is now improving rapidly. Pupils at the end of Year 2 in 2014 reached standards that were broadly average in reading, writing and mathematics. School data shows that current pupils are working at the levels expected for their age. Attainment by the end of Year 6 is average overall. In 2014, results in the national tests were above average in writing.
- Most pupils make good progress in Years 3 to 6. In 2014, almost all pupils made the progress expected of them, and a higher than average proportion made better than expected progress in reading. However, a few pupils in Year 4 have not previously made the same progress as other pupils in the school because teaching for these pupils has not been consistently good. These pupils are now making strong progress and are achieving well.
- Disadvantaged pupils supported by additional funding make very good progress, frequently better than that of other pupils in the school and pupils nationally. This is because the school makes good use of the additional funding to provide individual teaching support for these pupils. In 2014, disadvantaged pupils in Year 6 were a year ahead of pupils nationally in writing, and were four terms ahead in reading and mathematics. When compared to their classmates, they were more than a term ahead in writing, and more than four terms ahead in reading and mathematics.
- School information shows that disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress from their starting points. This is because of the carefully planned support they receive.
- The most-able pupils generally make the progress expected of them and achieve well. However, they make faster progress in English than in mathematics. Too few of these pupils gained the higher levels in mathematics in 2014.

### **The early years provision** is good

- Children start in the Reception class with knowledge, understanding and skills that are typical for their age. The quality of the early years provision is good. By the time children leave the Reception Year, they are well prepared to start Year 1.
- The proportion of children who show a good level of development in reading, writing and number work

by the end of the Reception Year improved in 2014.

- Good leadership ensures that children benefit from a wide range of stimulating activities that are purposeful and engaging, and which challenge the children in all areas of learning.
- Children behave well and show good attitudes to learning. They listen carefully to staff, work effectively together and enjoy their time in school.
- The quality of teaching is good. Staff have high expectations and regularly check on children's progress and use this information to plan tasks and activities to further challenge and extend the children's skills.
- There are strong links with parents and local nursery schools. These links help support the children to make the best progress they can. Children are safe and happy in the reception class. They are well cared for by adults who ensure the children remain 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>	453732

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>	189
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Barry Smethurst
<b>Headteacher</b>	Julie Branch
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	21 February 2013
<b>Telephone number</b>	01487 841468
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