

St Helen's CE Primary School

Highfield Road, Pontefract, West Yorkshire, WF9 4EG

Inspection dates 24–25 March 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected as an academy
	This inspection:	Requires improvement 3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement 3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good 2
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement 3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement 3
Early years provision		Good 2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- Pupils' progress requires improvement, particularly in writing. Recent initiatives to improve achievement and raise standards are not yet having an impact. The school is not yet building on the rising levels of achievement seen in early years provision.
- The achievements of disadvantaged pupils do not match those of other pupils nationally.
- The quality of teaching is inconsistent across the school. Teachers do not always check pupils' learning during lessons and, as a result, they do not move pupils on to harder work quickly enough.
- Pupils, particularly the most able, are not yet making sufficient progress because teachers' expectations of what they can achieve in lessons are not high enough.
- Not all middle managers and subject leaders are sufficiently effective in checking that teaching and learning are of the highest quality in their areas of responsibility, and that all pupils achieve well.
- There are too few opportunities for teachers and teaching assistants to observe best practice.
- Teaching assistants are not always aware of what is happening beyond the group they are working with.
- The presentation of pupils' work is not of a high enough standard.
- The range of subjects taught does not include sufficient first-hand experiences that inspire pupils to write.
- Although attendance is broadly average overall, a small number of pupils do not attend school regularly enough.

The school has the following strengths

- This is a very caring school where pupils are treated as individuals and adults have their best interests at heart.
- The governing body is working closely with senior leaders to strengthen teaching and learning in school. The school knows its strengths and areas for development, and has capacity to improve.
- Early years provision provides children with a very positive start to school because teaching is consistently good.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong because of the strong links with the church and the opportunities pupils are given to develop skills in music and art. Pupils willingly take on responsibilities that benefit the school community.
- Pupils' behaviour is good and pupils have good attitudes to learning. They have confidence in staff to deal with any problems that pupils might have. Pupils say that they feel safe in school and learn how to keep themselves safe.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited several lessons or parts of lessons, two of which were observed jointly with the headteacher or deputy headteacher. Inspectors looked at a range of pupils' work and heard a number of pupils from Years 2 and 6 read.
- Meetings took place with the headteacher, senior leaders, staff and groups of pupils. Inspectors also met the Chair, and other member of the governing body, as well as the director of the academy trust and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation, including the school's data on pupils' progress and records relating to pupils' behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.
- They observed movement around the school at playtime and at lunch breaks and attended a school production and an act of collective worship. Displays around school and also in classrooms were scrutinised.
- Inspectors took into account the 20 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) as well as the results of the most recent questionnaire carried out by the school. They also met with one parent and spoke informally with a number of others.
- The 18 responses to the staff questionnaire were also considered.

Inspection team

Christine Millett, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Paul Spray

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St Helen's converted to become an academy school on 1 July 2013 when it became part of the Wakefield Diocesan Academy Trust. When its predecessor school, bearing the same name, was last inspected by Ofsted it was judged to be inadequate.
- St Helen's is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The school's part-time Nursery operates in the mornings only. Reception children attend on a full-time basis.
- The majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils that speak English as an additional language is well-below average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported through the pupil premium, at 45%, is well-above average. (The pupil premium is additional funding to support pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those children who are looked after by the local authority.)
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is above the national average.
- In 2014, the proportion of pupils entering or leaving the school other than at the normal times was above average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- Since it was inspected in 2013 there have been a small number of changes in staffing.
- The school runs a daily breakfast and after-school club for its pupils.
- As well as being part of the academy trust, the school belongs to the Hemsworth Pyramid of Schools.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and raise standards at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2, particularly in writing, by:
 - providing pupils with more exciting and inspirational first-hand experiences in order to improve the quality of their writing
 - ensuring that the best practice from within this school and other schools is shared among staff and implemented consistently
 - setting tasks at the right level of difficulty, especially for the most able
 - ensuring that disadvantaged pupils achieve as well as other pupils and that gaps in attainment continue to close
 - encouraging teaching assistants to look beyond the group with which they are working
 - checking constantly the progress of pupils in lessons and moving them on to more challenging work as necessary
 - drawing pupils' attention to the importance of careful presentation and accuracy in their writing.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership by ensuring that middle managers and subject leaders are more involved in checking the quality of teaching and achievement of all pupils in their areas of responsibility.
- Continue the drive to improve the attendance of the small number of pupils who do not attend school regularly.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement because pupils' achievement is not yet consistently good. The headteacher, supported by senior leaders and governors, has taken action to improve teaching. However, improvement has not been fast enough and a significant proportion of teaching still requires improvement. Senior leaders recognise that they need to continue to check rigorously that the quality of learning in every classroom is good and that pupils are challenged appropriately.
- Some middle leaders and managers are not fully involved in checking the quality of teaching or leading improvements in their areas of responsibility.
- Staff have benefited from the performance management process, which has given them opportunities to develop their skills and knowledge through training and with support from senior leaders. Senior leaders have regular meetings with teachers to discuss pupils' progress.
- Disadvantaged pupils do not always achieve as well as their classmates. Senior leaders have responded to this by ensuring that systems for tracking pupil progress are in place and include a specific focus on this group of pupils.
- The leadership of the early years is good. Children are well prepared for Year 1 because teaching in the early years is consistently good.
- The school provides effective care, guidance and support for all pupils. However, because not all pupils make the same rates of progress in their learning, the school is not entirely successful in promoting equality of opportunity.
- Leaders ensure that pupils have a good understanding of British values which prepares them well for life in modern Britain. For example, pupils see democracy in action through the election of the school council and hear about it from visitors such as the Mayor of Wakefield. Pupils understand the need for rules and have respect for different faiths and beliefs.
- Well planned topics take account of the new National Curriculum. The themed approach of linking subjects such as English and history is helping to provide pupils with opportunities to practise their skills. However, there are too few opportunities to provide pupils with first-hand experiences to bring learning alive, engage them fully and stimulate their desire to write at length. Leaders have started to develop new approaches to assessment and the tracking of pupil progress without National Curriculum levels.
- The school supports pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. All staff encourage pupils to show respect for each other and reflect on the needs of others less fortunate than themselves. Opportunities to perform in music, drama and sport, and to learn a modern foreign language, further enhance this aspect of the school.
- Additional funding for sport is used well to develop the skills of teachers and give pupils access to a wider range of sports such as netball, golf and tag rugby. An experienced sports coach works alongside staff, and more pupils are attending the clubs on offer as well as competing against other schools.
- The pupil premium funding is used to provide extra, targeted support for pupils in smaller groups and to purchase additional resources. This is bringing about a gradual improvement in closing gaps in progress and achievement.
- The academy trust has provided valuable support to the school, especially during the first year of being an academy. Trust members make regular visits to the school and attend meetings of the governing body.
- The local authority makes three visits to the school a year. The school has access to other services it has to offer, such as training or checking the accuracy of assessments, should they be required.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is playing an increasingly focused role in the leadership of the school. They bring to the school a range of relevant skills and expertise that helps them in holding the leadership to account. They have benefitted from training, which enables them to understand what the school's data is saying about pupils' performance, and have the confidence to ask necessary questions about pupils' achievement. As a result of regular visits, governors know the school, staff and pupils well. Governors have a clear understanding of the quality of teaching and ensure that pay and promotions are matched to teachers' performance. Governors know how additional funding is being used to benefit disadvantaged pupils and increase sporting opportunities for all. Governors are committed to the continued safety and well-being of pupils and staff and all safeguarding requirements are met.

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

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils are friendly, confident and most demonstrate good attitudes to learning. They are very keen to talk about their experiences in school and do so eloquently.
- Pupils work well together and are considerate towards visitors, their teachers and other adults. They understand the school rules and the reasons for having them. Consequently, all pupils behave well in public areas and as they move around school. In classrooms the changes from one activity to another are managed well so that little time is wasted.
- Lunchtimes are sociable occasions and pupils' behaviour is good. In the playground pupils of all ages can be seen playing games and talking happily together.
- In lessons pupils share their ideas willingly. In collective worship pupils are keen to participate and there is no shortage of volunteers to answer questions.
- Inspectors observed an extremely impressive Key Stage 2 production of the Easter story. This not only enhanced pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, but also demonstrated pupils' great commitment to a project in being able to rehearse to reach such a high standard in a relatively short time.
- Pupils are encouraged to, and enjoy, taking on responsibilities in other ways. For example, as members of the school council and ethos committee they make a valuable contribution to school life. It is through the work of the school council that table cloths and flowers were introduced into the dining hall giving it a more restaurant-like feel.
- Pupils look very smart in their school uniforms and look after the school well. However, the presentation of their written work does not always show a similar level of care and pride.
- The breakfast club is located in its own building and is purposeful and pleasant. It provides pupils with a good start to the day. School staff and specialist coaches lead a range of popular after-school clubs.
- There are a few pupils who find managing their behaviour difficult; however, school records show that their behaviour is improving. There have been no exclusions.
- Attendance is broadly average. Systems are in place to monitor this and check why pupils are not in school. These have led to improvements, although a number of pupils are still absent too often.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good.
- Play times are supervised well. Adults are highly visible and well equipped with first-aid kits and walkie-talkies in case of accidents.
- Pupils are aware of different forms of bullying, such as cyber-bullying. They know how to keep themselves safe and avoid potential dangers when using the internet.
- While pupils acknowledge that bullying in school occurs very occasionally, they say that members of staff deal with it immediately, and that this means it does not happen again.
- Pupils say that they feel safe at school and all staff and the very large majority of parents who expressed views support this.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- The quality of teaching requires improvement because it is not consistently good in Years 1 to 6. As a result pupils' achievement is not consistently good.
- Expectations are not generally high enough, particularly of the most able, and pupils are not always challenged sufficiently to enable them to achieve well. Pupils who have gaps in their learning cannot always tackle work confidently; this slows their rate of learning.
- In lessons teachers do not always check pupils' learning often enough to make sure that pupils move on rapidly once they have shown that they have understood something.
- The teaching of writing remains the weakest area. Recent actions and new methods such as intensive sessions of phonics (letters and the sounds that they make), reading and writing in ability groups, are

starting to have the desired effect in reading. Improvements in writing have been slower. Some pupils remain reluctant writers because they do not have a wide enough range of interesting activities that make them want to write at length. The school is not doing enough to address this.

- The teaching of reading is improving in most classes. Pupils are taught phonics, skilfully in the early years and with increasing effectiveness in Key Stage 1. Reading is promoted well across the school. Pupils like reading and have opportunities to read in class as well as to make use of the pleasant, well-stocked library. Pupils are able to describe how they would work out unfamiliar words using their knowledge of phonics or use a dictionary to find out meanings of unfamiliar words. They happily help out if they see someone struggling.
- The teaching of mathematics is improving. However, due to weaknesses in teaching in recent years, a number of older pupils have gaps in their learning, particularly in basic skills such as times-tables. Teachers are tackling this with some success and pupils are starting to make better progress.
- Teaching assistants contribute well to pupils' learning. They are clear about their roles when working with specific groups of pupils or individuals and engage pupils in meaningful conversation, questioning and guiding their learning. However, occasionally they remain too focused on the particular group that they are with at the expense of supporting other pupils who also need their help.
- Teachers mark pupils' written work regularly and give pupils advice on how to improve the content of their work. They also make sure that pupils have the opportunity to respond and complete corrections. Pupils also check their own work and that of their partners in order to identify errors before the work reaches the teacher. However, teachers do not consistently model a clear handwriting style or draw pupils' attention to the importance of careful presentation.
- Positive relationships within classes mean that pupils are confident in asking for help from adults or their friends. This help is given willingly.
- Attractive displays along corridors celebrate pupils' achievements and show that their work is valued.

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Pupils are starting to make better progress. However, there remain some inconsistencies across year groups and ability groups. Pupils are now making faster progress in mathematics and reading than in writing. While decisive steps have been taken to raise levels of achievement in writing, there is still more work to be done.
- In 2014 the results of the Year 1 national screening check for phonics were below the national average but showed an improvement on the previous year. However, the very large majority of pupils who did not meet the standards in 2013 had done so by the end of Year 2 and were starting to apply their skills in phonics to improve their reading and writing.
- Standards at the end of Year 2 are starting to rise. In 2014, standards were below the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. Current data, supported by inspection evidence from observing learning in lessons and the work in pupils' books, show an improvement in all areas, making attainment similar to national averages in all three areas. However, there are still too few pupils reaching the higher levels.
- In 2014, the results in national tests at the end of Year 6 showed that attainment in reading and writing was below the national average with mathematics above. The majority of pupils made expected progress in reading, writing and mathematics. The proportions making more-than-expected progress were above the national average in reading.
- Overall, there is insufficient challenge in lessons for the most able pupils. Too few pupils reached the higher levels in writing and mathematics in both Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 in 2014. The levels of progress made by this group across Key Stage 2 were only better-than-expected in reading.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs vary from class to class, as does the complexity of their needs. The school quickly identifies individual needs and provides good systems of support that are carefully monitored. From their starting points, these pupils make similar levels of progress as their classmates.
- In 2014 nearly all pupils in the Year 6 class were disadvantaged, so meaningful comparison between their achievement and non-disadvantaged pupils in the school is impossible to draw. In comparison to the attainment of other pupils nationally, the disadvantaged pupils were approximately three terms behind in mathematics and reading, and five terms behind in writing. School data, supported by inspection evidence, show that, currently, the actions introduced by the school to narrow any gaps between

disadvantaged pupils and others are starting to have the desired impact.

- Improvements in the quality of teaching are starting to improve achievement throughout the school. Work in pupils' books and the school's own assessment records show that progress in reading, writing and mathematics in all classes is starting to show signs of improvement with some pupils now making good progress.

The early years provision

is good

- The early years provision is led and managed well. Staff are knowledgeable and fully understand the needs of young children as well as the principles underlying good quality early years teaching. Staff plan and work together as a well-organised team. This ensures that children's earliest experiences of school are happy and enjoyable.
- Children make good progress in acquiring basic skills in the different areas of learning so that the proportions reaching a good level of development are above those found nationally. Disabled children and those with special educational needs also make good progress because their needs are quickly identified and they receive well targeted support from all staff. By the time they leave the Reception class, children are prepared well for Year 1.
- Children settle quickly and are happy to come to school because they are given a wide range of well-organised and interesting activities that take into account their interests and excite their curiosity.
- Children learn in a bright, stimulating and language-rich environment with access to a spacious outdoor area. Both the indoor and outdoor areas are resourced well, which means that children can learn and play equally well in either area. The learning areas are safe and enable children to be adventurous and take risks in a safe, secure environment.
- Adults provide support and encouragement when necessary, but also allow children to work on their own and discover things for themselves, allowing them to become independent, confident learners.
- Behaviour is good. Nursery and Reception children work and play well together. The Reception children provide good role models for the younger ones, modelling important qualities such as cooperation and sharing.
- Children's achievements are well documented and shared with parents. Staff have a good relationship with parents and this begins even before children start school through home visits and pre-school groups. Parents are encouraged to share their children's successes at home with staff and so contribute to on-going assessments.
- Effective transfer arrangements ensure that learning in Year 1 builds on the good learning and progress begun in early years.

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	139573
Local authority	Wakefield
Inspection number	449865

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	195
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Fr Robert Hart
Headteacher	Mrs Sue Henderson
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected as an academy
Telephone number	01977 723700
Fax number	Not applicable
Email address	office@sthelens.wakefield.yhgfl.net

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