

St Helen's Catholic Primary School

West Street, Hoyland, Barnsley S74 9DL

Inspection dates

16–17 February 2016

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Standards at the end of Key Stage 2 have not been maintained since the time of the previous inspection.
- The quality of teaching and learning over time, and currently, is too variable across the school.
- Not enough pupils make expected or more than expected progress in mathematics from their starting points.
- Instability in the leadership of the school and the teaching team has meant that recent improvements have not had time to become embedded.
- Action plans are not aligned closely enough to the specific needs of the school, are too general and therefore do not focus specifically on the needs of the pupils at St Helen's school.

The school has the following strengths

- The executive headteacher has a clear strategic vision for the school. Recent changes are beginning to strengthen the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in most classes.
- The work of the federation is enabling the school to utilise key strengths of other leaders and teachers to help drive improvements.
- Pupils behave well. They show respect and consideration to others and their social, spiritual and moral education is well developed.
- Catholic and British values are promoted well throughout the school and pupils are well prepared for their life in Britain.
- Outcomes for children in the early years are good.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning so that it is consistently good or better by:
 - securing permanent, high-quality teachers in Key Stage 1 and early years provision
 - ensuring that pupils are given challenging work so that rates of progress continue to improve
 - using stronger teachers to support and develop the work of any teachers identified as needing support
 - raising teacher expectations so that inconsistencies in rates of progress continue to be addressed and more pupils make rapid progress
 - ensuring consistent progression in handwriting and spelling across the school, using work from the strongest teaching to showcase particularly high standards.

- Accelerate the progress of pupils in mathematics by:
 - ensuring basic skills in number work are secured across the school, including addition and subtraction facts and times tables
 - checking to make sure that mathematics is taught at a high enough level to accelerate progress across Key Stage 2
 - monitoring progress in mathematics closely to ensure that more pupils reach age-related expectations
 - constantly checking that pupils from identified groups are making at least good progress in mathematics.

- Improve leadership and management by:
 - securing a permanent head of school
 - ensuring that a named governor from the Corpus Christi Federation has specific responsibility for St Helen's
 - supporting and developing weaker teaching where it is identified to ensure that improvements come about quickly
 - improve action planning so that it focuses on the specific needs of groups, particularly for disadvantaged pupils, middle attainers and boys.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management requires improvement

- Significant changes to staffing over time have created difficulties for the executive headteacher to maintain and improve standards across Key Stage 2. Key appointments to senior and middle leadership roles and teaching positions have not been secured. Some parents and staff members express concern at the number of staffing changes over the last three years, which have caused a high degree of uncertainty and change. Parents feel that the school does not communicate these changes well.
 - Leaders have not acted quickly enough to ensure that progress for pupils improves over time. This has led to pupils entering Year 6 needing to make up too much ground, particularly in mathematics.
 - Action plans for improvement are in place and link into the school development plan. However, generic plans across the federation are not precise enough in targeting specific actions for this school. For example, plans for mathematics do not focus on securing improved outcomes for boys or middle-attaining pupils. Plans for writing do not focus on supporting pupils who are from a disadvantaged background. Therefore, analysis of the information available is not always being used to target improvements precisely enough.
 - The executive headteacher has now secured a strong Key Stage 2 team. As a result, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is improving quickly. Previous weaker teaching in Key Stage 2 has been tackled.
 - Regular monitoring, coaching and professional development opportunities are being provided for all teachers, particularly for those who are less experienced and where teaching has been identified as weakest.
 - Performance management arrangements are in place and link into pupil performance reviews. Information is gathered from a range of sources and used to hold teachers accountable.
 - Staff state that they are well supported through a range of professional development opportunities. Year 6 teachers across the federation meet regularly to review progress and moderate standards across the three schools.
 - The curriculum is enhanced through visits and visitors. Links with the federation allow the schools to join together to utilise visitors particularly well. At the time of the inspection, pupils in one class were visiting another school to participate in a pirate day as part of their topic. Opportunities to learn a musical instrument are offered to pupils and pupils spoke enthusiastically about learning to play the ukulele. After-school clubs provide pupils with a variety of different experiences. Extra funding to support the development of physical education is targeted effectively.
 - The local authority has brokered support from another school to help sustain improvements. Documentation shows that support and challenge are evident. However, this support has not prevented a decline in the school's effectiveness since the previous inspection.
 - The school has strong spiritual values and celebrates a range of cultures through work in its religious curriculum. Pupils show a firm understanding of the moral code instilled through the strong emphasis on Catholic values. Pupils described how they have contributed to a local charity through fundraising activities. As a result, pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
 - Leaders strongly promote the importance of equal opportunities and ensure that discrimination is not tolerated.
 - The school has recently undergone an external review on the use of pupil premium funding. There is a plan in place but sometimes this does not identify where specific actions need to be targeted.
 - Leaders have used the primary school sports grant well to provide improved participation in sporting activities.
- **The governance of the school**
- Governors have a sound understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They understand their duties and are keen to support the school in moving forward. Governors check on the information provided to them by asking challenging questions, which are minuted. Meetings focusing purely on pupils' progress are now being held in which governors are monitoring the accuracy of the information and looking for areas of underperformance.

- Governance arrangements are delivered by the Corpus Christi Catholic Federation whereby one governing body oversees all three schools. In practice, this means that no one governor knows St Helen’s thoroughly across all aspects of the school’s work. Consequently, support and challenge are not as robust as they could be. Governors recognise the need to secure high-quality, permanent appointments to sustain improvement over time.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. There are robust systems in place, which are monitored by the executive headteacher. Leaders follow up any referrals quickly and detailed, concise records are kept safely.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement

- There has been too much variability in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment over time, which has led to a decline in standards over the last three years. There are signs that teaching is strengthening in Key Stage 2. However, weaknesses remain in Key Stage 1.
- Where teaching is weakest, in Key Stage 1, work set lacks challenge. For example, reading books for some younger pupils do not always offer sufficient challenge to extend their reading skills. Typically, for younger pupils, expectations are not high enough. Some pupils spend too much time on low-level activities and are not engaged in their learning. As a result, some pupils are not making enough progress.
- In some classes, teachers do not regularly check that reading homework has been completed.
- As a result of weaker teaching over time, pupils’ basic skills are not fully developed. In mathematics, some older pupils use fingers to add seven and nine, and others went through their times tables to find the answer to six times seven. In writing, some older pupils are not fluent in their joined writing style and pencil grip is poor.
- The strongest teaching in Key Stage 2 promotes pupils’ joy of learning. They engage well with learning activities and apply their knowledge enthusiastically to tackle challenging problems. For example, in one class, pupils were working in pairs converting and adding fractions. They knew exactly what to do, because the explanation was clear. Work was at an appropriate level and the most-able pupils were challenged further. Pupils exuded confidence and glowed with pride as they worked through the questions.
- In another class, the teacher utilised mental arithmetic time at the start of the lesson to pick up on any misconceptions. The pace of learning was fast; pupils were focused and involved in their learning. They enjoyed the humour and positive relationships established by the teacher.
- Improvements to the quality of marking and feedback are having an impact on the quality of work. Regular monitoring by leaders from the federation is ensuring that the new marking and feedback policy is being strictly adhered to. Checks of teachers’ assessments are helping to ensure accuracy.
- Pupils’ attitudes to reading in Key Stage 2 are very positive. Older pupils have the opportunity to read every day; they read a wide variety of books, swapping favourite books with friends, and can give reasons why they like particular books. Their reading skills are developing well and they enjoy reading.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school’s work to promote pupils’ personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are well cared for and feel safe in school. Most parents agree that their children are safe and happy. Regular safety days take place where pupils are taught about safer internet use and how to keep themselves safe.
- Pupils are confident learners, willing to have a go and, where teaching is strongest, show a great enthusiasm for learning.
- Pupils enjoy school and speak fervently about their teachers and the positive relationships they experience.
- Teaching assistants work well with individual pupils, enabling learning, delivering individualised programmes and supporting behaviour.

- Catholic values are taught well. Pupils know how to treat each other and they also understand that if you do something wrong you should apologise and accept that what you did was the wrong thing.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- In the majority of classes, where stronger teaching is evident, learning behaviours are good. Pupils are interested in their work, show positive attitudes and enjoy applying themselves to learning. Pupils enjoy the rewards on offer and are particularly pleased when they are singled out for exceptional behaviour, through the golden book or receiving raffle tickets. Some parents feel that pupils were not well behaved, but pupils themselves said that behaviour was good.
- Support for individual pupils who exhibit challenging behaviour is strong. Teaching assistants skilfully engage pupils and have formed strong bonds to support their learning.
- Pupils proudly wear their 'play leader' badges and speak enthusiastically about what their role entails. They particularly like the new equipment that is available at lunchtime. Pupils say they feel safe and that if bullying does happen, it is dealt with quickly and they know the consequences.
- Attendance remains above the national average.

Outcomes for pupils

require improvement

- Current rates of progress in Key Stage 2 show an improving picture following three years of decline. Teaching which required improvement has led to pupils not achieving their potential. Recent work to monitor pupils' progress, and higher expectations set by leaders, are contributing to a more positive picture.
- Current progress across Key Stage 1 is typically weaker than that seen elsewhere in the school.
- Key Stage 2 attainment in reading, writing and mathematics has declined since the time of the last inspection and is below the national average. Too few pupils are reaching the higher levels of attainment.
- Progress in mathematics particularly requires improvement and pupils achieve less well in mathematics than in reading and writing. As a result, pupils are not being prepared well enough for their next stage of education.
- The number of pupils making the expected and more than expected progress in reading was just above average in 2015. In writing, improvements in 2015 show that the number of pupils making expected progress is broadly average. However, too few pupils make more than expected progress in writing.
- Attainment in phonics is improving and standards are above those seen nationally. At the end of Key Stage 1, standards are just below those seen nationally.
- Not enough pupils who are disadvantaged are making more than expected progress in writing or in mathematics. Outcomes for boys are not as strong as those for girls across the school.

Early years provision

is good

- Outcomes at the end of Reception Year are good. More children are reaching a good level of development than seen nationally. Outcomes for girls are particularly strong.
- The learning environment is welcoming and the play areas are carefully thought out to develop children's imagination and creativity.
- Children concentrate well on given tasks. A group of children were creating aliens out of Play-Doh. They took turns, shared, negotiated and worked happily with each other.
- Writing displays show a wide range of abilities, with some children writing in sentences, using full stops and being encouraged to use capital letters. Other children are still learning to form letters correctly and are being supported to write their names. It is difficult for leaders to fully track progress in writing as samples of work are not annotated and do not indicate whether they have been completed independently or with support.
- Very recent changes to teaching staff in the early years provision are being supported well by an early years leader from within the federation.
- Good progress in mathematics was evident when looking through children's work samples.
- Parents' comments are positive about their children's progress and the good start they make in early years.

School details

Unique reference number	106640
Local authority	Barnsley
Inspection number	10003078

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	148
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Gerrard Hannafin
Executive headteacher	Lynda Hoyle
Telephone number	01226 742172
Website	www.federationcc.org.uk
Email address	sthelens@federationcc.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	25–26 April 2012

Information about this school

- This school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- Since the last inspection, a new executive headteacher has been appointed to lead all three schools within the Corpus Christi Catholic Federation.
- The school does not have a nursery attached and receives pupils from a wide variety of pre-school settings.
- The majority of pupils come from White British backgrounds and most live locally to the school.
- A low proportion of pupils are supported by pupil premium funding. Pupil premium is additional government funding provided to give support to those pupils eligible for free schools meals and children who are looked after by the local authority.
- Percentages of pupils with special educational needs or disability are low, but the school has more pupils who are supported with a statement or education, health and care plan than is found nationally.
- There has been a high staffing turnover at the school. Only one class teacher was in post at the time of the last inspection. The three permanent teachers are all in Key Stage 2. Teachers in Key Stage 1 and early years provision are all temporary.
- Since the head of school left, governors have been unable to appoint a permanent replacement. The executive headteacher has also covered this role on some occasions.
- At the time of the inspection, one newly qualified teacher (NQT) was on a temporary contract, and another NQT on a supply contract had started the day before the inspection.

Information about this inspection

- During the inspection, the inspector scrutinised documents, and met with the executive headteacher, temporary head of school, teacher with responsibility for special educational needs, the federation mathematics and early years leader, and the governing body.
- A telephone conversation was held with a representative from the local authority.
- Teaching and learning were observed in every class. These observations were with the executive headteacher, the temporary headteacher or the early years leader from the federation.
- Key Stage 1 pupils were out of school on the second day of the inspection.
- Consideration was given to the 24 responses to Parent View, and 21 written responses. The inspector also talked to some parents after school on the first day of the inspection.
- Staff questionnaires were taken into account and a short meeting was held with a group of staff members. Three staff members spoke to the inspector individually.
- Pupils' views were listened to during a meeting with older pupils and from talking to them throughout the inspection.

Inspection team

Janet Lunn, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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