

# St Helen's CE Primary School

Highfield Road, Hemsworth, Pontefract, West Yorkshire WF9 4EG

## Inspection dates

25–26 April 2017

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

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement

- Over time, pupils' achievements in reading, writing and mathematics have been below those found nationally.
- While standards are improving quickly overall, there remains variability in the progress rates of some pupils.
- Pupils' skills in writing still lag behind those found in reading and mathematics, but are improving quickly.
- Teaching has not been consistently strong over time. It has not ensured that all pupils do as well as they might and meet standards of which they are capable.
- Gaps remain in older pupils' knowledge and skills as a legacy of historically weaker teaching.
- Some pupils, including most-able pupils, have not been consistently challenged to stretch their thinking and understanding. The proportion of pupils working at a greater depth in their learning is smaller than that found nationally.
- Rates of attendance remain below average and too many pupils are persistently absent, despite recent improvements.

### The school has the following strengths

- The school is improving quickly. Since the previous inspection, school leaders have tackled weaknesses rigorously and with dogged determination. Their actions have ensured that current pupils are now making strong progress.
- All leaders' continuing ambition to eradicate underperformance and provide the best experiences for all pupils is translated into action. This is transforming learning.
- Provision in the early years is good. It stimulates children's curiosity and engagement. Children make good progress in their learning.
- Pupils are happy and say that they feel safe. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is supported very well. Behaviour is good, and pupils are polite and friendly.
- Teachers assess pupils' work carefully, and give timely support and guidance so pupils know their next steps in learning.

## Full report

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

- Improve outcomes for pupils by:
  - continuing the drive to accelerate the progress pupils make in their learning, especially in developing high-quality writing skills
  - eradicating gaps in the knowledge and skills of older pupils in reading, writing and mathematics
  - ensuring that a greater proportion of pupils work at a greater depth in all subjects.
- Improve the quality and consistency of teaching by:
  - ensuring that work is well matched to pupils' needs and abilities and provides suitable challenge, especially for most-able and most-able disadvantaged pupils
  - checking that agreed whole-school initiatives and actions to further improve teaching are implemented consistently across every class.
- Review and improve the strategies and systems to improve pupils' rates of attendance so that the proportion who are regularly absent decreases to at least match that found nationally.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

**Good**

- The headteacher has been unwavering over the past two years in her determination to secure an excellent standard of education for pupils in this school. She has been supported well by the deputy headteacher and the recently appointed assistant headteacher. Working alongside governors, senior leaders have worked tirelessly to eliminate underperformance, improve the quality of teaching and accelerate the rates of progress pupils make in their learning. The impact of their work is beginning to emerge.
- The ambition and drive to improve all aspects of school life, including from dedicated and knowledgeable governors, are being maintained. Changes in staffing have been effectively managed with an experienced hand. Shrewd appointments have strengthened the leadership team.
- The impact of the many actions taken to tackle weaknesses identified at the last inspection has improved the quality of teaching and learning so that current pupils are now making strong progress in their learning. There has been too little time to see improved outcomes for pupils in published data from statutory assessments, or to plug gaps in some older pupils' knowledge and skills resulting from historically weaker teaching and leadership.
- Leaders and governors have an accurate view of what the school does well, and what it needs to do in order to be even more successful. Procedures to monitor and evaluate the quality of the school's performance through checking the quality of teaching are incisive and detailed.
- Leaders' plans for further improvements reflect a clear view of the school's strengths and weaknesses, with which inspectors concur. The school development plan is detailed and carefully monitors the impact of planned actions on outcomes for pupils in their learning. Regular evaluation and the tracking of actions ensures that no time is wasted to drive further improvements.
- The school's curriculum is rich and balanced, and reviewed regularly to ensure that it meets pupils' needs and interests. Links are made to allow pupils to develop skills across the curriculum, such as writing an explanatory text to describe the construction of Roman roads as part of a history topic.
- The curriculum is designed to make sure that it provides many varied opportunities for pupils to benefit from visitors to school, or to make visits out of school across the region, such as visiting a living history museum for pupils to dress and act as Romans. The curriculum is enhanced by a suitably wide range of after-school clubs, such as English and mathematics clubs, a board games club, music clubs and many sports clubs.

- Leaders have managed pupil premium spending effectively to provide targeted support for disadvantaged pupils through employing additional members of staff, training key members of staff to provide extra support, and securing the services of a speech and language therapist. In addition, funding has subsidised the cost of some visits to inspire learning. The positive impact of these actions is seen through the good progress now made by disadvantaged pupils across the school.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported well. Their needs are identified early and their progress, which is good, is tracked accurately. Consequently, the special educational needs funding is used effectively by leaders.
- The physical education and sport funding for schools has been used well. Teachers benefit from professional development opportunities from a specialist physical education teacher who works across a cluster of local schools. The impact of this has been substantial and positive because teachers' own skills and confidence have improved. Pupils benefit from high-quality lessons and engage regularly in competitive sports.
- The school receives appropriate and timely challenge and support from the Enhance Academy Trust. The work of the trust's improvement partner has effectively supported leaders in making the substantial improvements seen in the school since the previous inspection.

## **Governance**

- Governance of the school is much improved since the previous inspection. Governors bring a range of appropriate professional skills and experience to the school. The governors' rapid improvement group now meets every half term and gives governors the opportunity to rigorously challenge and investigate the actions of leaders, while also offering good support. This group has played a very significant role in driving forward school improvements and eradicating weaknesses.
- Leaders are held to account for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, as well as for the quality of outcomes for pupils seen in statutory tests and school data. They have an accurate and incisive view of the school's strengths and weaknesses from first-hand experience, participating in monitoring activities alongside senior leaders. Governors are passionate to see all pupils fulfil their true potential.

## **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The school has a tangible ethos that is positive and caring, putting the welfare and well-being of each pupil at the heart of all that it does. This is clearly seen in the friendly, happy and confident manner of the pupils at St Helen's.
- Policies, procedures and records are of good quality and up to date. Summary records of incidents of concern are kept in the online system. All staff are appropriately trained and have access to well-written policies and guidance. As a result, they have a secure understanding of their individual responsibilities for safeguarding.
- The well-established culture of keeping pupils safe remains very evident. Leaders leave no stone unturned in their duty to keep pupils safe, which is appreciated by parents.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

**Requires improvement**

- The quality of teaching over time has been weak. It has resulted in pupils not reaching the standards of which they are capable, or fulfilling their true potential.
- Some older pupils still have gaps in their knowledge and skills as a result of historically weaker teaching which holds them back in statutory assessments. There are still some variations in the quality of teaching across school as a result of changes in staffing.
- Work is now usually pitched well according to pupils' abilities, but on some occasions work still does not provide suitable challenge, especially for most-able and most-able disadvantaged pupils. This was certainly the case in the past when most-able pupils' progress was slow and they did not develop in their ability to work at a greater depth in their skills and knowledge.
- The quality of teaching is much improved since the previous inspection and is now mostly having a positive impact on learning, including in reading, writing and mathematics. This is reflected in the strong progress pupils now make in each year group, with a much larger proportion on track to reach standards typical for their age.
- Lessons are usually lively and interesting, and capture pupils' imagination. For example, some pupils in key stage 1 enthusiastically found features of an information text because of the interesting resources prepared by the teacher such as photographs and age-appropriate books. Pupils in Year 2 were excited to write a character description because it was based on the book they were reading in class.
- Teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and stick closely to the school's behaviour policy. Very occasional low-level disruption in lessons is addressed quickly and effectively.
- As a result of the rigorous and systematic teaching of phonics, pupils get off to a fast start in their reading. Adults are skilled at delivering well-structured reading lessons. Pupils who read to an inspector used their phonics skills well to read unfamiliar words.
- In mathematics, basic skills of number and mental calculation are taught well and consolidated regularly. Teachers make good use of practical resources to allow pupils to grasp patterns and relationships in number.
- The wider mathematics curriculum is covered well, such as in Year 3 where pupils used their knowledge of the properties of two-dimensional shapes to discover the combination to the teacher's locked suitcases. Pupils are developing in their abilities to think mathematically, conjecture and reason when problem-solving.
- Pupils are now writing with enthusiasm and imagination, often because their writing is linked to the topic or text they are studying. Teachers use good subject knowledge and structure learning effectively. Feedback to pupils offers support and guidance, and allows them to understand their next steps to improve as writers.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.

- Pupils show respect and care for each other. This is typified by pupils voting for the 'star of the week' which they undertake thoughtfully and honestly. They value their classmates' opinions, and are used to working happily and cooperatively in lessons. Pupils' skills in speaking and listening in paired and group discussions are good.
- Pupils thrive in the well-ordered, positive and caring Christian school environment. Displays are bright and attractive and support learning well. The school's work to ensure that pupils' physical and emotional well-being are valued and promoted is very effective, and is enhanced by the work of the pastoral care officer.
- Pupils report that they feel safe at all times, including when working online. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness and development are very good. Pupils talked convincingly to an inspector about how they learned about people from other countries and cultures.

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- The strong relationships that are nurtured in school ensure that pupils usually conduct themselves well in lessons and around school. Pupils are polite and have good manners. Playtimes are harmonious occasions when pupils play happily together and no one is left out.
- Pupils enjoy their learning and mostly work conscientiously. Incidents of low-level disruption are rare. Behaviour systems encourage positive attitudes to learning and the few incidents of misbehaviour are swiftly and deftly addressed.
- The school has worked hard to improve attendance. The pastoral care officer has a range of strategies, including first-day absence phone calls, free breakfast club passes and meetings with parents. A wide range of rewards for good attendance including T-shirts and certificates are used. Rates of attendance for this year to date are much improved on the same time period last year, but remain below those found nationally.

### Outcomes for pupils

### Requires improvement

- Since the school was last inspected, outcomes for pupils in reading, writing and mathematics have been below the national average. There was some improvement in 2016 when results were above the government's floor standard, which is the minimum expectation for attainment and progress in English and mathematics at the end of Year 6. Even so, as a result of weaker teaching in the past, there is a legacy of inconsistent achievement and gaps in some older pupils' skills and knowledge.
- Although many pupils in Year 1 met the expected standard in the national phonics screening check, the proportion was just below that found nationally. Pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics is now accelerating across key stage 1, with the proportion who attained the expected standard in 2016 just below national levels. This marks a significant improvement on the previous year.
- Pupils' progress and the standards that they reach are improving rapidly in reading, writing and mathematics. However, achievement in writing still lags behind that in reading and mathematics because it is only improving at the same rate and not faster.

- The progress of the current most-able and most-able disadvantaged pupils largely matches that of their classmates and has accelerated since the start of the year. A larger proportion of pupils than previously are on track to achieve a high score in forthcoming assessments.
- Currently, a much larger proportion of pupils across school are working at greater depth, especially in Years 1 to 3, than previously. This has not always been the case because teachers in the past often set work that did not challenge or stretch pupils' thinking. As a result, the proportion of pupils who were working at greater depth was below that found nationally, including for disadvantaged pupils.
- The progress and attainment of current pupils in nearly every year group are improving rapidly. Evidence from work in books, which matches the school's own tracking data, clearly shows that current pupils are making consistently strong progress in English and mathematics, as well as other subjects across the curriculum.
- As a result of the effective and strategic use of the pupil premium funding, disadvantaged pupils in each year group are now making good progress in English and mathematics. In some year groups, their rates of progress outstrip those of their peers. In 2016, standards reached by disadvantaged pupils, including most-able disadvantaged pupils, were below those of other pupils nationally with similar starting points, but are now quickly improving.
- The school is now quick to identify any pupils who are at risk of falling behind. Staff make effective provision for these pupils through activities that are well matched to their individual needs and abilities. This includes pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Where needed, detailed support plans are in place with challenging targets. As a result, the progress made by these pupils from their individual starting points is good.

## Early years provision

**Good**

- Children are eager to learn and explore. They enjoy opportunities provided to investigate and learn happily together. Their behaviour is consistently good. Progress in personal, social and emotional development is good and this accounts for the strengths seen in children's behaviour and in their relationships with adults. They are encouraged to take turns and to consider others.
- The vast majority of children start in the early years with skills and knowledge just below those typical for their age. As a result of good teaching and provision, careful observation and good questioning, children make good progress and are well prepared to start Year 1.
- Although not all children are making consistently high rates of progress across the early years, the proportion reaching a good level of development is above that found nationally. Occasionally, the most able children are not challenged and do not achieve as highly as they could.
- Adults observe children carefully and build on their interests. They carefully support children's learning through prompts, skilful questioning and working alongside them during imaginative and creative play sessions.

- Basic skills in reading, writing and number are promoted very effectively. For example, a group of Reception children read together with the teacher who modelled the blending of sounds very effectively. His probing questioning developed the children's understanding of the story very effectively. Another group of children used mathematical apparatus to understand simple number bonds, and to grasp that there are different ways to represent a number using a 2-digit addition.
- The experienced, skilled and highly effective early years leader understands the learning needs of young children. She has successfully created an effective team of adults who share the same passion and drive to see children thrive. She has a clear understanding of the strengths in the early years and has accurately identified key areas for improvement.
- Leaders are vigilant in all aspects of safety and safeguarding children's welfare. Judging by the confidence and fun with which they play and learn, children here clearly feel very safe, secure and happy.



## School details

Unique reference number	139573
Local authority	Wakefield
Inspection number	10031026

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Sponsored academy
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	217
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Father Robert Hart
Headteacher	Sue Henderson
Telephone number	01977 617 955
Website	<a href="http://www.st-helens.wakefield.sch.uk">www.st-helens.wakefield.sch.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:headteacher@st-helens.wakefield.sch.uk">headteacher@st-helens.wakefield.sch.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	24–25 March 2015

## Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.
- St Helen's is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The school's part-time Nursery operates in the morning and afternoon. Reception children attend on a full-time basis.
- The school is a member of the Enhance Academy Trust.
- There have been a number of staffing changes since the previous inspection.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium is higher than the national average.

- The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage and speak English as their first language.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is lower than that found nationally.
- The school meets the current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for attainment and progress in English and mathematics at the end of Year 6.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in lessons, including one lesson jointly observed with the headteacher. In addition, an inspector listened to some pupils from Years 1 and 2 read, and inspectors reviewed a sample of pupils' work alongside the headteacher and deputy headteacher.
- Inspectors held meetings with the chief executive officer of the trust, the school improvement partner from the trust, a group of governors, the headteacher and deputy headteacher. They also held meetings with other members of the teaching staff and a group of pupils.
- Inspectors viewed a range of documents including information on pupils' achievements over time, the school's data on recent and current progress of pupils, and the school's view on how well it is doing. Inspectors also reviewed the school development plan, documents relating to safeguarding, and records of behaviour and attendance.
- Inspectors took account of the 24 responses from parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, comments made by parents online and the 13 responses to the online inspection questionnaire for staff. The school's website was also scrutinised.

## Inspection team

Phil Scott, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Chris Cook

Ofsted Inspector

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