

St Helen's Primary School

Colne Road, Bluntisham, Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire PE28 3NY

Inspection dates

5–6 June 2018

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
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

- The federation's executive headteacher and governors have been slow to act to ensure that the school has the capacity to secure good standards.
- Pupils in Year 6 did not make the progress of which they were capable in 2016/17, most notably in writing and mathematics.
- The quality of governance has declined since the previous inspection. Governors do not have a precise enough understanding of standards in the school to challenge leaders effectively.
- Leaders' monitoring is not sharp enough in checking that pupils make good progress from their starting points.
- Leaders and governors do not understand the difference that the additional funding makes to disadvantaged pupils' achievement and attendance.
- The wider curriculum and assessment processes are not fully developed. Although pupils access a range of subjects, the quality of their learning experiences is variable.
- The quality of teaching and learning over time has been inconsistent. This has partially been affected by staffing turbulence and a lack of permanent teaching for pupils.
- There is inconsistency in the expectations that teachers have about what pupils can achieve. Teachers do not use pupils' starting points to plan work that ensures that pupils achieve well.
- Pupils, most of whom arrive at the school as inquisitive and thoughtful children, are not receiving sufficient opportunities to develop social skills and be good learners as they move through the school.
- A number of parents are not confident in the leadership of the Horizons Learning Federation.

The school has the following strengths

- Early years provision is securely good. Children get a good start to their education.
- The new head of school this year is bringing improvements to the quality of leadership, teaching, staff recruitment, morale, and parental confidence in school leadership.
- The local authority's tenacious and diligent support has been instrumental in stemming any further decline in standards this year.
- New middle leaders and permanent staffing are bringing additional capacity to improve the teaching of mathematics and writing.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the federation's leadership and management of the school by continuing to work with the local authority to:
 - develop a clarity about the roles and responsibilities of leaders and governors within the federation
 - act quickly on the recommendations of the recent governance and forthcoming leadership reviews
 - improve the federation's communication and relationship with parents.
- Further developing leadership and management in the school by:
 - sharpening leaders' understanding of the progress that pupils are making from their starting points
 - embedding the new curriculum and assessment processes to ensure that pupils have the breadth of knowledge and skills required to achieve well by the end of each key stage in all subjects
 - ensuring that the use of the additional funding for disadvantaged pupils is supporting individual pupils who do not attend and achieve as well as they should.
- Raise standards, most notably in mathematics and writing, across key stages 1 and 2 by:
 - raising staff expectations about what pupils can achieve, so that planning takes better account of pupils' starting points, including for the most able pupils, and when pupils are ready to achieve more
 - provide further training for staff so that they are more confident in using the assessment processes accurately and consistently.
- Build on the work of the head of school to further enhance pupils' personal development and behaviour by:
 - ensuring that all pupils are well supported to retain an interest in their learning, and use learning time effectively
 - developing more opportunities for pupils to develop leadership and responsibility skills in the school and local community
 - continuing to develop communication with parents and carers, so that they have greater confidence in all leaders and governors, as they do in the head of school.

An external review of the use of pupil premium funding should be undertaken to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Standards fell in 2016/17. Leaders and governors did not have a precise enough view of the on-going situation in the school. Emerging issues, such as staffing turbulence, were not addressed appropriately. As a result, the executive headteacher and governors did not have a good enough understanding of the issues and, consequently, did not stem the decline in standards for pupils.
- The executive headteacher and governors have not ensured that the federation's new system for measuring progress is effective in supporting leaders to raise standards quickly. For example, leaders do not find the system easy to use to gain a sense of the progress that pupils are making from varied starting points. Consequently, leaders are not quick enough to intervene to ensure that pupils make the good progress of which they are capable.
- Leaders and governors have not maintained a strong positive relationship with parents since the previous inspection. The new head of school has worked extensively to bring a greater sense of trust in the school's leadership. While parents are overwhelmingly supportive of her leadership, there remains a significant core of parents who are not as impressed with the leadership, governance and communication of the federation.
- Although pupils access a range of subjects, the curriculum and assessment in these subjects are not all well developed. Pupils do not receive enough opportunities to produce high-quality work in all curriculum areas, and apply their writing, reading and mathematical skills. New middle leaders have been appointed and the federation has bought in a commercial programme to address these issues. It is too early to see the impact of this work.
- Leaders and governors are not sharp in how they review the impact of the additional funding for disadvantaged pupils. Currently, leaders allocate the funding appropriately to support pupils, but they do not review whether it is having the intended impact on those pupils well enough. In particular, they are not ensuring that it is making a meaningful difference to pupils' achievement and attendance.
- In the past year, there has not been sufficient time allocated to ensure that pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities make good progress. The current federation-wide leader for SEN is diligent in reviewing and monitoring these pupils. However, the federation acknowledges that more capacity is needed to support staff in the school. Leaders have therefore appointed a school-based leader for next year.
- The sports and physical education (PE) premium is spent appropriately. Money is being used to ensure that pupils get routine access to a range of sporting activities. However, some of this funding is being used in ways that leaders did not expect, for example on staff training and specialist support, owing to staffing turbulence.
- The work of the local authority this year, alongside the new head of school, is bringing improvements to standards. Together they have identified the urgent priorities and are setting about addressing them. However, they have not had sufficient time to ensure that the good standards identified in the previous inspection have been re-established.

- The head of school has worked quickly to address staff retention and morale. New staff, with permanent contracts, have been recruited. The head of school works collaboratively with staff on any changes that she makes to the schools' systems and provision. As a result, this has increased staff morale dramatically in a relatively short period and is bringing more capacity for securing consistency in the quality of teaching and pupils' experiences.
- Systems established this year by the head of school are holding staff to greater account for the performance of pupils. This monitoring is giving senior and middle leaders a better understanding of staff training needs. Additional time has been allocated to support staff training. This is showing early signs of bringing greater consistency to the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- There is ever-developing support between the heads of school in the three federation schools. Here leaders and staff are working closely together to try to support one another when undertaking scrutiny of work and curriculum development, most notably using the practice at Holywell Primary School, rated outstanding by Ofsted in 2013.
- Leadership in early years is good. Children make good progress because of leaders' work to ensure that they are well supported, both educationally and personally. These children are well supported to be ready for Year 1.

Governance of the school

- The quality of governance in the school has declined in the past year. The federation of governors increased from supporting two schools to three in 2016. Difficulties in recruiting to the governing body has meant that a lot of work has fallen to a relatively small core of committed, but overburdened, governors. This has made it difficult for governors to provide the breadth of support and challenge to St Helen's that they did in the past.
- Governors rely too heavily on the information provided by the executive headteacher. They visit routinely, but do not use other information to challenge leaders about standards in the school, such as, for example, published information on pupils' achievement. Consequently, they are not precise enough in their understanding of how well pupils are achieving compared to other pupils nationally.
- Governors acknowledged these weaknesses this year and consequently commissioned a review of governance to look at how they could better deploy their range of expertise. As a result of the review, they now have a much stronger understanding of what they need to do to improve.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The single central record of checks on staff is appropriate. Staff appointments meet all statutory checks.
- Staff are well trained in the most up-to-date guidance, including the 'Prevent' duty, which focuses on preventing pupils from being vulnerable to radicalisation and extremism. Staff make appropriate referrals to the designated safeguarding leaders.

- Pupils are taught how to stay safe, both online and in the wider world. They access a number of lessons, themed days and assemblies. These events also give pupils guidance about how to keep themselves safe from dangers online. Pupils say that they feel safe, and that there are staff who they can go to when they are worried about things.
- The work of the designated safeguarding leaders and SEN leader for the federation ensures that pupils receive support from a range of different external and internal services.
- The school makes appropriate checks on pupils when they are absent from school. However, on occasion, the school's records are not precise. Leaders acknowledge that they need to ensure that all staff provide the same level of detail in their recording of information when they make contact with parents, carers and external agencies.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Where pupils have received temporary and inconsistent teaching over the past year they have not made good progress from their starting points. Current teachers, including a number who are new this year, plan for whole class learning but they are not yet ensuring that they are identifying and planning to address gaps in individual pupils' knowledge and skills.
- Not all teachers have high enough expectations of what pupils can achieve. Planning does not focus sufficiently on pupils' academic ability or previous learning. Most pupils undertake the same activities, irrespective of their starting points. As a result, pupils complete their work but do not make consistently good progress.
- The quality of the teaching of the wider curriculum is variable. Pupils are enthusiastic about their lessons, such as science, PE, and music. However, pupils are not always developing a depth of knowledge over time; nor are they being given opportunities to develop their literacy and numeracy skills meaningfully. As a result, pupils are not producing high-quality work in the wider curriculum.
- Teachers' and teaching assistants work well with pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities to ensure that they engage in their learning. Pupils also access external specialists such as speech and language therapists. However, interventions for these pupils' academic needs are not always timely. As a result, the progress that these pupils make in one week is not routinely capitalised on in the following week, and their progress is not as strong as it could be.
- The head of school and the leader for reading have focused on raising the profile of reading across the school. Reading corners, vibrant displays, focused reading days and additional reading resources have been established throughout the school. Pupils talked to inspectors about how they enjoy reading and are given numerous opportunities in school to read independently, to each other, or with adults.
- The head of school is raising expectations about what pupils should be able to achieve. Where training has been put in place this year, teachers are actively using this to plan more engaging activities for pupils. This work is also being enhanced by the subject support provided by the local authority. This is having a visible impact on pupils' engagement and focus on learning, particularly in key stage 2.

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- From their positive and enthusiastic starting points, pupils are not given many opportunities to develop an understanding about responsibility and leadership. They are keen to take on responsibilities, in both the school and locally, but these opportunities are limited.
- Most pupils do cooperate and play together well. However, on occasion, pupils say that sometimes their classmates can be unkind. Leaders are reviewing their systems for monitoring behaviour and bullying over time, so that they can be better placed to react to some of these low-level issues, as they have done, for example, with their recent whole-school focus on kindness.
- The most vulnerable pupils are well supported by leaders to access timely welfare support when they need it, for example through access to mental health teams and counselling. These programmes of support for pupils are well thought out and fully reviewed. Leaders work closely with parents and carers to support pupils both at home and at school.
- Welfare support for children in the early years is good.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Although almost all pupils start lessons focused and engaged, where learning does not meet their needs well, a number of pupils begin to lose concentration and become distracted. On occasion, pupils report that this can lead to some low-level disruption and silly behaviour, most notably in key stage 1.
- Generally, the overall attendance of pupils remains a strength of the school. Most pupils value their education and attend well. However, disadvantaged pupils' attendance has been below average for the past three years. Leaders' actions over time have not brought sustained improvements in these pupils' attendance.
- Throughout the school day, pupils cooperate well, play together, and are friendly and very welcoming to visitors. They are polite and inquisitive. They understand the school rules and are keen to adhere to them.
- The behaviour of most children in the early years is good. Where there are occasional issues, staff in the early years develop well thought-out and precise support that helps children and their families to rectify children's behaviour.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- The good outcomes identified in the previous inspection have declined. In 2016/17, the progress that pupils made, most notably in key stage 2 in mathematics and writing, was significantly below average.
- Current pupils in Year 6 are making slightly better progress from their starting points, although attainment is still too low. Leaders and governors were slow to act to address the issues, until the arrival of the new head of school. As a result, these pupils are unlikely to make the progress of which they are capable. Currently, pupils are not as ready for secondary school by the time they reach the end of Year 6 as they should be.
- Pupils in other key stage 2 year groups are starting to make better progress because gaps in their learning are diminishing. For example, pupils in Year 5 are starting to make more consistent progress. However, this progress is not as apparent for all groups of pupils in all years, especially for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities.
- Published information does not give a clear picture of disadvantaged pupils' achievement over time, given the small numbers in each year group's cohort. However, on review of the provision in the school, it is evident that leaders' use of the additional funding is not meeting the very specific academic needs of different pupils. As a result, these pupils do not make good progress as they move across year groups.
- Outcomes at key stage 1 are weaker this year. Phonics outcomes have been slightly below the national average since the previous inspection. Although reading standards are becoming stronger, and the quality of phonics teaching is improving, writing remains weaker. New middle leaders are focusing intensively on raising these standards and can show evidence of short-term impact in their work with individual pupils.
- Outcomes in the early years are good.

Early years provision

Good

- By the end of Reception, the proportion of children attaining a good level of development is usually at least in line with the national average, if not above it. Children make good all-round progress in all areas of learning.
- Leadership in the early years foundation stage ensures that the very youngest children in the school get off to a strong start. Leaders use assessment well to plan learning activities that ensure that almost all children make good progress from their starting points.
- Leaders' work to prepare children for arrival into the Reception class is effective in helping children to settle quickly. Good communication with feeder nurseries, home visits, and engaging induction days ensure that adults know children well and that children receive the right support when they arrive at school.
- Children learn quickly how to listen and share. Children respond well to staff's high expectations about their behaviour. Where a small number of children struggle to regulate their behaviour, the school's insightful and timely support is effective in getting them the right support, including from external agencies. As a result, the

behaviour of children in early years is good.

- Leaders ensure that they accurately check children's starting points when they enter the early years. Children have many opportunities to use the basic skills of reading, writing and mathematics in the activities that staff plan for them. Phonics is taught well in the early years. Children develop their early English and mathematics skills securely.
- Staff use pictorial and written records, and observations of children's work and progress to plan appropriate next steps for children's learning. Children grow as confident learners in the stimulating environment. Leaders are currently reviewing the outdoor environment to ensure that it offers the same level of stimulation as the indoor one.

School details

Unique reference number	110888
Local authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	10046097

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	160
Appropriate authority	The governing body of Horizons Learning Federation
Chair	Barry Smethurst
Federation executive headteacher	Rebecca Ford
Head of school	Julia Walker
Telephone number	01487 841 468
Website	www.st-helens.cambs.sch.uk
Email address	office@st-helens.cambs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	February 2015

Information about this school

- The school joined Horizons Learning Federation in 2015.
- There is a shared governing body and executive headteacher across the three schools in the federation: Holywell Primary School, Somersham Primary School and St Helen's Primary School.
- The executive headteacher joined the federation in September 2016.
- The head of school was appointed in autumn 2017. She was previously employed at Holywell Primary School.
- The proportion of pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium funding is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is lower than the national

average, including for those pupils who have an education, health and care plan.

- No pupils access any alternative provision and all pupils access full-time provision at the school.
- The school did not meet the floor standards set by the Department for Education for the achievement of pupils in Year 6 in 2017.
- The governing body requested support from the local authority in autumn 2017, and local authority officers have been working with the school on a weekly basis since this time. This support has been extensive, ranging from leadership mentoring, subject-specific guidance and a governance review. At the time of the inspection, there was also a leadership review scheduled to be undertaken the following week.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning across the school. Some of these observations were undertaken jointly with members of the senior leadership team.
- Meetings were held with the executive headteacher, the head of school, and other leaders. Meetings were also held with representatives of the governing body for the federation, and a telephone call was held with the chair of governors.
- Inspectors scrutinised work from across different key stages and subjects.
- A range of documents were scrutinised, including the school's self-evaluation, development plan, minutes of meetings, safeguarding records, pupils' progress information, and school policies and procedures.
- Inspectors analysed 76 responses from Ofsted's online survey of parents, Parent View, including free text commentary provided by some parents. Inspectors also spoke to some parents on the school site during the inspection.
- Inspectors analysed 16 responses to Ofsted's online survey of staff. Inspectors also spoke to staff throughout the two days of the inspection.
- There were 26 responses to Ofsted's online survey for pupils. Inspectors spoke informally to pupils at breaktimes, lunchtimes and in lessons. Inspectors also met formally with pupils to discuss their experiences of school.

Inspection team

Kim Pigram, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Paul Barraclough

Ofsted Inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Raising concerns and making a complaint about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.gov.uk/government/publications/complaints-about-ofsted. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at www.gov.uk/ofsted.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2018