

St Helen Auckland Community Primary School

Manor Road, St Helen Auckland, Bishop Auckland, County Durham DL14 9EN

Inspection dates

17–18 October 2018

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The acting headteacher is very effective. She leads the school with clear moral purpose. She has high expectations of herself, staff and pupils.
- Middle leadership is strong. Working with senior leaders and governors, middle leaders are driving up pupils' standards and levels of staff expertise at the school.
- Safeguarding is effective. Staff receive appropriate, up-to-date training that ensures that they have the skills to keep pupils safe.
- Disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities receive effective additional support. They achieve well from their different starting points.
- Children do well in the early years provision. This is because it is well led, and staff have high expectations. Links with parents are strong.
- Reading is a strength of the school.
- Most teaching is effective. Pupils enjoy learning in interesting and attractive classrooms where skilled, kind and knowledgeable staff care for and challenge them well.
- The quality of teaching in key stage 1 is variable and expectations are not always high enough. This is slowing some pupils' progress.
- Pupils know how to keep themselves safe. They learn how to manage potential risks to their safety and well-being.
- The curriculum is carefully designed to ensure that pupils have the knowledge and skills they need to enjoy life and make good and sustained progress. It is underpinned by a wide and varied range of extra-curricular activities.
- Governors challenge leaders effectively. They know the strengths and areas for further improvement of the school. The school is well supported by the local authority.
- Pupils are well behaved. Relationships among pupils and between adults and pupils are open, kindly and respectful.
- Most parents speak very positively about the school. They are pleased with the education and care provided by the staff.
- The school's work to develop pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness is strong. Staff provide pupils with many opportunities to explore these aspects of their lives through many extra-curricular and other activities.
- Phonics screening check scores have been variable over time.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Eradicate any remaining variations in the quality of teaching, especially in key stage 1, so that pupils make consistently good progress by ensuring that:
 - all staff have the highest expectations of what pupils can, and should, achieve
 - all staff use the detailed information that the school gathers on pupils more promptly to focus their teaching so that all pupils consistently make the progress that they should
 - the consistently good practice that is evident in most of the teaching at the school is systematically shared across all years.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The acting headteacher leads the school with a clear moral purpose. She is determined to ensure that, despite staffing uncertainties, the school improves rapidly. She leads by example and has high expectations of herself, staff and pupils. She has put in place a range of effective structures and measures to ensure that teaching is good and better and, as a result, pupils make generally strong progress. Staff welcome her openness and team approach. Staff morale is high.
- Leaders have developed accurate, externally verified, systems to check how well the school is doing. Information about pupils' progress is gathered regularly. Staff use this information to focus teaching precisely on what pupils need to do and experience next to make good and better progress. The acting headteacher and her staff engage effectively with local schools and other partners, including the local authority, to check the accuracy of their assessments.
- Disadvantaged pupils make generally strong progress, similar to that of their peers. This is because the acting headteacher, supported by governors, is determined that no pupil is disadvantaged by their circumstances. The school works relentlessly to remove, as far as is possible, barriers to pupils' access to well-being, learning and success. Pupil premium funding is well and effectively deployed.
- Middle leaders are a strength of the school. The acting headteacher has carefully and systematically supported middle leaders so that they, working together and with governors, play a vital role in improvements at the school. Increasingly middle leaders play a vital role in monitoring the quality of teaching and leading regular training for teachers and support staff.
- Teaching assistants are a strength at the school. They are very well supported and increasingly challenged to develop their skills even further. They welcome the ways in which the acting headteacher and the teaching staff encourage their full participation in the planning and monitoring of pupils' learning and well-being. Their work is having a positive effect on pupils' progress.
- The additional funding that the school receives to support pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is used effectively. The leader for this aspect of the school's work has been very effective in ensuring that carefully focused actions are put in place to meet these pupils' needs. She has also, through careful monitoring, assured the impact of these actions. As a result, these pupils make good progress from their starting points.
- The physical education and sport premium is used well to provide professional development for staff and to extend opportunities for pupils. The school offers many activities through which pupils can explore and understand the importance of healthy life styles. The recently introduced 'skip to be fit' programme helps pupils exercise regularly and monitor their progress. Regular reflection and mindfulness sessions help emphasise the importance of mental health and self-awareness. Pupils welcome this.
- The school's curriculum is well thought out and focused on giving every pupil the knowledge and skills they need. The core subjects of English, mathematics and science are enhanced by a rapidly developing wider curriculum where pupils gain subject-

specific knowledge and skills. The wider curriculum is effectively underpinned by the whole-school approach to reading that has been recently and successfully introduced.

- Because of the carefully thought out curriculum and the school's focused emphasis on developing all pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding and skills, pupils are very well prepared for their next steps in learning and to take their place as informed, reflective citizens.
- Most parents speak very positively about the school and the service it offers their children. A significant number spoke positively about the school's leadership and the care and challenge their children receive. As one parent wrote to the inspectors: 'My children are very happy in this school. There is a real sense of community and you can tell that the teachers really try their best for all of the children in their care.'
- Leaders have put in place rigorous and humane systems to assess the quality of teaching and its effect on pupils' learning and well-being. Leaders use this information carefully to assess teachers' performance and help target support and training so that the quality of teaching is constantly improving. Staff welcome this approach and the conversations it stimulates about teaching and learning.
- Because of the increasingly detailed checking systems that the acting headteacher and her team have put in place, leaders and governors have a clear and accurate understanding of the quality of education at the school. As a result, they can identify accurately areas that need attention and put in place effective, carefully monitored actions that ensure improvement.
- There are still some inconsistencies in the quality of teaching, particularly in key stage 1. The acting headteacher, other leaders and governors are aware of this and have put in place detailed support systems to address and eradicate this weaker performance.

Governance of the school

- Governors know the school and the community it serves well. They have worked closely with the acting headteacher and her team to successfully guide the school through times of change and uncertainty.
- Because they know the school well, governors are effective at holding leaders carefully to account for their work. Governors visit the school regularly to monitor its work and speak with pupils about their progress. Governors also have increasingly detailed and effective links with subject and phase leaders. As a result, they are very well informed and able to make astute and positive decisions in the very best interests of the school and the community it serves.
- Governors seek to improve their skills. They attend regular training sessions run by the local authority.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The acting headteacher ensures that there a culture in the school where staff have a clear understanding of their responsibilities and of the procedures that keep pupils

safe. As a result, staff promptly identify and appropriately support potentially vulnerable pupils. They also engage tenaciously with outside agencies to ensure that pupils and their families get the support that they require and deserve.

- Procedures and systems for checking the suitability of visitors and staff recruitment are strong. There are rigorous checks in place to assure staff's suitability to work with children.
- The acting headteacher, working with her team, ensures that all staff and governors are well trained and skilled in safeguarding matters. There are regular training sessions to keep staff informed and up to date. The acting headteacher is well supported by the designated safeguarding governor in this.
- Pupils know how to keep themselves safe because of the school's actions. They have many opportunities to learn and understand how to stay safe through the subjects they study, class time and during assemblies. Pupils told the inspectors that they regularly learn about how to stay safe online. Older pupils play a direct part in this work in their roles as e-cadets.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers are skilled and have high levels of subject knowledge. They know their pupils well and use this knowledge to focus their teaching on the learning needs of individual and groups of pupils.
- Pupils want to learn. They take real delight in learning and rise to the challenge when staff expectations are high. They take pride in their work and presentation is generally good, particularly in key stage 2.
- Relationships among pupils and between adults and pupils are open, honest and kindly. The atmosphere in the school's attractive classrooms, where learning materials are readily at hand, is vibrant, with pupils responding promptly and well to staff requests and questions. Pupils work well together.
- There is strong set of effective and school-wide approaches to learning that encourage pupils to be develop their independence and resilience as learners. For example, in all classes across the school pupils can indicate whether they need help or not by putting a coloured spot of either red or green on the desk in front of them. Inspectors were, at first, taken aback by the teachers inviting the class to 'get your spots out'. However, it soon became clear what this meant. Pupils reported that they liked the ways that staff across the school shared expectations and class routines.
- Staff use questioning well to elicit detailed responses from pupils and address misconceptions. Inspectors saw many examples of staff using insistent yet kindly questioning to deepen and develop pupils' learning. They saw skilled staff challenging pupils in their learning by asking challenging questions that asked 'why' and 'how' rather than the more mundane 'what'.
- Teaching assistants are well deployed. They have a positive impact on learning and pupils' well-being. They support pupils effectively and help remove barriers to their learning by keeping them on track and focused on the task in hand. The majority of teaching assistants show high levels of skill, particularly in the use of questions.

- The whole-school approach to writing is having a very positive effect on pupils' skills and confidence as writers, especially in key stage 2. Staff encourage pupils to develop their distinctive skills as writers in subjects such as science, geography and history by giving them more opportunities to write at length and, as a result, deepen their thinking and extend their learning. This is particularly the case with the most able pupils.
- Phonics is well and enthusiastically taught, particularly in the Reception Class. Pupils respond well to the detailed, multisensory approach and the high expectations and skilled questioning of both teachers and teaching assistants. Learning and confidence developed at a cracking pace in the phonics sessions that inspectors saw during the inspection. Because of the skill and vigilance of staff, pupils who may be falling behind are quickly identified and their needs met with additional, carefully targeted support.
- Reading is real strength across the school. The recently introduced, whole-school approach has resulted in reading having a very high profile. Pupils spoke with real enthusiasm about their reading and about the ways in which the school encourages them to read. Books are evident everywhere. Staff encourage not only a love of reading in pupils, but also a focus on developing young readers' skills in identifying the ways that writers use language to create effects and stimulate ideas.
- Mathematics is, generally, well taught. Inspectors saw staff, particularly in key stage 2, using carefully structured work and focused questions to test out pupils' knowledge and skills and deepen their understanding. Pupils responded with enthusiasm, working together and in teams to solve problems. The diet of mathematics is varied with an appropriate emphasis on problem-solving that uses and tests out pupils' number and logic skills.
- Parents receive regular and detailed updates on how their children are doing at school. As well as the regular written reports, staff are readily available if parents wish to talk about a particular issue. Parents said that they welcomed this aspect of the school's work.
- Teachers generally follow the school's approach to feedback so that pupils are clear what they need to do next to improve. However, inspectors did see examples of pupils not responding to staff requests and, as a result, opportunities were lost for some pupils to build on and extend their learning. This was particularly the case in key stage 1.
- Although teaching is generally strong across the school, there are examples in, especially, key stage 1 where staff expectations of what pupils should and must achieve are not consistently high and pupils do not make the progress that they should. Inspectors saw, for example, the use of work sheets where the boxes available for pupils to write in were too small for them to write at length.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are polite, confident and aware of the needs of others. They relate well to each

other and to staff. They spoke with real pleasure about how much they enjoy school and how well the staff care for them. They know that staff at the school would be there for them if they ever had a problem.

- Pupils wear their uniforms with pride. They care for their school. There are many informative and attractive displays that help pupils understand and celebrate their place in the school, the local community and the wider world. These displays are regularly updated and celebrate both individual and group success and effort. There is no litter.
- The school engages very effectively with pupils' families. There are strong links with home. The vast majority of parents, when asked, said that they were very satisfied with the service that the school offers. They commented positively about the regular reports they receive about their children's progress and well-being and the ready accessibility of staff.
- Because of the school's detailed and regular work, pupils have a very good understanding of the forms that bullying can take and what to do to combat it if it were to occur. Pupils say that bullying is very rare. They say that they feel safe and are safe because of the school's actions.
- The school actively promotes a healthy lifestyle. Meal choices are healthy. Pupils know what constitutes a healthy diet. There are regular exercise sessions. There are also regular mindfulness sessions. Pupils told inspectors that they enjoy and welcome these.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Staff have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. Pupils told inspectors that behaviour was good. They reported that the school's systems to support and reward positive behaviour work well and make a positive difference. As a result, disruption to learning is rare and when it does occur it is dealt with swiftly and consistently.
- Pupils are, generally, very interested in what they do at school. They enjoy learning and finding out. They have responded very favourably to the school's recent focus on reading.
- Because of leaders' efforts, overall attendance is improving and is now just below the national average. The attendance of the small minority of pupils who are persistently absent is also improving. However, it is still too high. Records show that the school's work to improve rates of attendance are effective. Pupils are very clear about why it is important to attend school regularly.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Inspection evidence shows that, across almost all year groups and in a wide range of subjects, including English and mathematics, current pupils make sustained and, often, substantial progress from their starting points. This is because they are effectively taught and eager to learn.
- Evidence gathered through the scrutiny of a large number of pupils' books, spanning a

wide range of subjects, shows good and sustained progress in almost all years across the school. The school's own detailed, moderated and checked assessment information indicates that pupils make particularly good progress in key stage 2. Inspection evidence supports this view.

- Pupils have made rapid progress since 2017 when there was concern with reading in key stage 2. This is because leaders at the school have put in place a range of measures to improve the quality of the teaching of and pleasure in reading across the school. Provisional reading outcomes for summer 2018 at the end of key stage 2 show very significant improvements. Key stage 2 reading outcomes are set to be well above the likely national average.
- Across the school, disadvantaged pupils make good progress from their starting points. The differences between the outcomes of these pupils and their peers is negligible. This is because, as a result of leaders' actions, all staff are fully aware of the needs and barriers to learning for the disadvantaged pupils in their care and teaching is carefully focused on supporting them so that they make good progress.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make generally good progress because of the staff's detailed knowledge of their needs and teaching which breaks down tasks into manageable steps. The leader for this area of the school's work has also identified areas for next steps in further improving the provision for these pupils.
- The percentage of pupils meeting the required standard for the phonics screening check varies from year to year. Provisional, unvalidated results for 2018's Year 1 pupils showed a slight decline from the year before. Inspection evidence shows that current Year 1 pupils, building on their Reception experience, are making good progress. They apply their developing phonics skills well. Pupils who took the phonics check again at the end of Year 2 in 2018 all made gains on their previous outcomes. Inspection evidence gathered about these pupils now that they are in Year 3 shows that the school has been successful in further developing the reading skills of this small group of pupils so that they can access the full curriculum.
- Inspection evidence shows that current most-able pupils in key stage 1 make good progress. However, staffing uncertainty in key stage 1 has meant that progress overall so far this term has not been as sure as it should be across a section of key stage 1. This is being addressed by leaders. However, it is too soon to see the sustained positive effect of leaders' actions.

Early years provision

Good

- The leadership of early years is good. The leader has established an effective team of staff who have a wide range of skills that they are keen to improve even further. All staff feel valued and able to contribute to planning and the monitoring of children's progress.
- The early years team's assessment of children as they enter the provision is meticulous, kindly and careful. It draws on a wide range of evidence and information about each child. By the time they enter the provision, staff know the children and their families well and, as a result, they can plan carefully for each child's needs. The early years team engages very closely with external agencies, such as the health visitor

team, to ensure that, as far as is possible, children and their families receive the support that they need.

- Children settle into the early years provision well. Parents say that the provision's open communication is a real strength. Parents said that they are kept fully informed and feel able to speak to staff about their children at any time. They also welcomed the many opportunities that they have to stay and play with their children.
- Children's acquisition of language and its use in communication is a high priority in the provision. Inspectors saw staff modelling language as they spoke with children. They used questioning expertly to encourage and extend children's vocabulary and confidence with words. This is already, even at this early stage of their time in school, having a positive impact of children's confidence and facility with language.
- Staff have developed a stimulating and safe learning environment which provides a wide range of interesting learning activities and experiences. The indoor and outdoor environment is uncluttered and stimulating. There is a strong emphasis on encouraging the development of language. A great deal of thought, based on detailed observations of how children have progressed, goes into arranging the space to support and stimulate children's excitement and pleasure in learning. Children respond very positively to this.
- During the inspectors saw children delighting in exploring the world of pirates. Staff had set up a range of interesting and open-ended activities that encouraged children to play, talk and collaborate. Children were particularly pleased and eager to talk about the treasure maps that they had drawn, complete with an appropriate X for where the treasure lay.
- Most children enter the Reception class with skills and knowledge typical for their age. They make strong progress. This is because activities are carefully planned and staff's observations of how children are doing are used to inform next steps.
- Children who have SEN and/or disabilities are carefully identified and their needs met. Children who may need additional support in the current cohort have already been identified. This is the result of the team's meticulous induction programme. The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) is already working with the early years team to identify appropriate support so that these children receive the support that they need to succeed. Over time, children who have SEN and/or disabilities make very good progress from their starting points.
- The teaching of reading is a strength of the early years provision. Phonics is well taught. Inspectors saw children being expertly taught by skilled staff. Children make strong progress in their reading. They talked confidently to inspectors about what they liked about books. Children regularly read at home and parents welcome the support they are given by the school to help them read with their children.
- The proportion of children reaching a good level of development by the end of the Reception Year is improving year on year and is now close to the national average. Early years staff work with other schools and the local authority to assure the accuracy of their judgements.

School details

Unique reference number	114104
Local authority	Durham
Inspection number	10052985

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	208
Appropriate authority	Local authority
Chair	Canon Father Robert McTeer
Acting headteacher	Janet Elmes
Telephone number	01388 604168
Website	www.sthenauckland.durham.sch.uk
Email address	sthenauckland@durhamlearning.net
Date of previous inspection	19–20 November 2014

Information about this school

- St Helen Auckland Primary School is slightly smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The acting headteacher has been in post since May 2018.
- Most pupils are White British.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils eligible for the pupil premium is significantly above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is above average.
- The school offers a breakfast club and a range of other sessions before school. The school also offers a range of clubs and activities after school.
- The school has a nursery provision that offers both morning and afternoon sessions. It also has provision for two-year-olds.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in all classes across the school. Most of these lessons were jointly observed with the acting headteacher or the leader for teaching and learning. Inspectors listened to pupils from Years 5 and 3 read. They also talked with pupils across the school about their experience of reading, both in and out of school.
- Inspectors observed two whole-school assemblies.
- Inspectors met with the acting headteacher and the leader for teaching and learning, the SENCo, middle leaders and members of the governing body, including the chair of the governing body. The lead inspector spoke with an officer of Durham local authority on the telephone. Inspectors reviewed a range of the school's documentation, including that related to safeguarding, achievement, the quality of teaching, attendance and behaviour.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour and conduct at breaks and lunchtimes. They spoke informally with pupils about their experience and attitudes to school during these times. Inspectors also spoke more formally with pupils from Years 2 and 6 about school and the range of opportunities it offered them to explore and enjoy learning.
- Inspectors scrutinised a wide sample of pupils' work from the current and last academic year from all year groups and in a range of subjects.
- Inspectors considered the 10 responses to an Ofsted survey of staff. Inspectors also spoke with parents and carers at the start and end of the school day to seek their opinions of the school's work and care for their children. They also reviewed the 22 responses on Parent View. The lead inspector also reviewed responses from 21 parents via the free-text facility.

Inspection team

Mark Evans, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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Ofsted Inspector

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