

St Helen's Primary School

Durham Street, Hartlepool TS24 0HG

Inspection dates

16–17 January 2019

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	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher has established a culture of high expectation that has transformed the learning environment. She has inspired her wider team to decisively improve the academic progress and personal welfare of pupils.
- The headteacher has built a strong senior leadership team which works closely with colleagues to support progress. This team ethos has made a significant contribution to school improvements since the last inspection.
- Teachers have used research and training effectively to improve the quality of teaching. These processes have led to marked improvements in pupils' outcomes.
- Leaders and teachers engage purposefully with parents and the wider community. These partnerships enhance pupils' outcomes and personal well-being.
- Governors are committed to the school and the wider community. Their combination of community awareness and educational insight have been important influences in the school's improvement journey.
- Middle leaders are developing their roles to enhance the curriculum and the quality of teaching. They are taking increasing responsibility for checking standards.
- Teachers and teaching assistants are highly attentive to the needs of vulnerable pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). This enables these pupils to develop emotional resilience and make good progress.
- Subject leaders are building a broad and rich curriculum while also developing their own leadership skills. Some aspects of the school's work on British values are less developed.
- High expectations, effective teaching and caring relationships help children in the early years to make good progress.
- Pupils show care and consideration towards one another and adults. They express their views openly as they know that their views are valued.
- Leaders have introduced effective systems to support the progress, attendance and wider development of disadvantaged pupils. Although some differences in attendance and attainment remain, disadvantaged pupils make good progress.
- While the overall quality of teaching is good, there remains some variance in quality in a small number of classes.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further develop the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - enhancing the curriculum so that the strengths in pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are reflected in their understanding of British values
 - refining the leadership skills of middle leaders to increase the capacity for further improvement
 - continuing to diminish any remaining differences in the attendance, progress and/or attainment of disadvantaged pupils.
- Improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by:
 - enabling the most effective teachers to share their expertise with their peers so that any variance in the quality of teaching can be addressed.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher has raised expectations at all levels since the previous inspection. She is committed to achieving strong academic outcomes and the highest standards of care for all pupils. This commitment is shared by her team and has led to significant improvements for pupils since the previous inspection.
- The headteacher has built leadership capacity with the appointment of a new deputy headteacher and two assistant headteachers. These colleagues work diligently with teachers and teaching assistants to check standards and strengthen teaching.
- Leaders have used research and training in a considered manner to secure successful and ongoing improvement. Teachers value the professional development they receive and opportunities to share ideas with their colleagues. This has led to sustained improvements in the quality of teaching.
- Leaders have brought in effective systems to make teachers at all levels more accountable for the progress and attendance of pupils. They hold regular meetings to explore pupils' progress and well-being. These thorough checks on pupils' progress have led to changes in teaching and to additional interventions that are supporting pupils' good and improving progress.
- Senior leaders have developed thorough systems and processes to check the quality of teaching. This provides them with an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. Teachers have worked with the local authority and local schools to check the quality of pupils' work. Standards of assessment are accurate.
- Leaders, including the parental support adviser, have shown considerable moral purpose in their commitment to the wider community. They act determinedly to support pupils and their families. Their actions to invite parents in to the school, including opportunities to read, paint and cook alongside their children, have created an open and inclusive learning environment.
- The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) is working closely with parents and pupils to diagnose needs and provide support for pupils. This is helping pupils with SEND to engage effectively with their learning and make good progress from their starting points. Teaching assistants work with occupational therapists to provide customised help. One parent praised teachers for going 'the extra mile'.
- Middle leaders are becoming increasingly responsible for leading improvement, although some aspects of their work to check standards are not as fully developed. They have worked with senior leaders to establish minimum expectations for the knowledge and skills that they want pupils to acquire across a wide range of subjects. Their work is helping pupils to access a broad and balanced curriculum. In science, pupils have regular opportunities to work scientifically and carry out experiments. External trips, visits to local industries and visitors to school expand pupils' understanding of the curriculum and its relevance to the wider world.
- Teachers at all levels have developed a curriculum that regularly addresses the historical importance and geographical distinctiveness of the local area. For example, pupils discover how industry has affected the River Tees over time and the significance

of the 1918 Hartlepool bombardment. This heightens pupils' curiosity and their understanding of where they live.

- Performance management arrangements are effective. The process has supported improvements in teaching and pupils' progress since the previous inspection.
- Leaders carried out a thorough review of their use of pupil premium funding after the previous inspection. They now use additional funding well to support pupils' academic progress, social and emotional needs and to provide wider support for families. They have developed effective systems to help teachers to check the progress and attendance of disadvantaged pupils. Leaders and teachers provide early support to overcome the barriers that pupils may face. These actions are helping pupils to make good progress in most areas, although on occasions this progress is not fast enough to diminish differences in attainment.
- The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Leaders encourage a culture where pupils show respect for different groups in society, including different faiths and cultures. Leaders ensure that pupils access a wide variety of trips and visits to expand their horizons and develop their self-confidence. Some aspects of the school's work to develop pupils' understanding of British values are less well developed.
- Funding from the government to promote sport and increase physical activity is being used to increase pupils' participation in a wider variety of competitive sports. In 2017/18, teachers secured a 50% increase in sports participation rates. The school's success in the area has been recognised in a Schools Games Silver Mark Award. Pupils participate in a range of competitive sports, including tag rugby, netball, cross country, tennis, and basketball. Funding has also been used to successfully enrich sporting activity in the school playground.

Governance of the school

- Governors have responded with intelligence and purpose to the review of governance that took place after the last inspection. They have reviewed their skills and recruited new governors to provide additional expertise. As a result, they provide effective support and challenge.
- Governors share the headteacher's commitment to securing the highest standards of care and academic progress for pupils. They have a balance of community awareness and educational expertise that they use to hold leaders and teachers to account.
- Governors have used training actions to check that leaders provide them with an accurate picture of school standards. They now visit school with specific areas to explore and report their findings back to the governing body. Middle leaders value the increased scrutiny that governors now provide. Governors have a good awareness of the use and effect of additional funding.
- Governors have a strong understanding of school performance. The headteacher provides governors with accurate information that they can trust because of the rigour and accuracy of assessments. They are able to unpick performance information to gain a clear picture of the progress that pupils make.
- Governors are keen to ensure that the improvements achieved in 2018 are sustained.

They are increasing their own expertise and capacity for future improvement by shadowing governor roles and participating in training. They are supporting school leaders in further partnership work with other schools and the local authority so that the accountability systems they have developed can be further enhanced.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders have developed a strong ethos of safeguarding and ensure that all staff are continually mindful of pupils' welfare. A number of staff are trained to a high level to provide additional safeguarding expertise.
- Leaders carry out thorough checks to ensure the suitability of adults working on-site. They also ensure that staff and governors receive up-to-date training on a range of safeguarding issues. Staff demonstrate a clear understanding of safeguarding policies and practices.
- Leaders are proactive in supporting pupils' welfare. Through the work of the parent support adviser, the school actively reaches out to the local community to provide care and practical support for pupils and families. In many cases, the school acts as a crucial link between families and other support services.
- Leaders pursue any concerns over pupils' welfare swiftly and follow these through to ensure that pupils are safe. Leaders document any concerns in a detailed and timely manner.
- Pupils feel safe in school and value the support of teachers and other adults. Pupils demonstrate a good awareness of the actions they can take to keep themselves safe online.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The headteacher and her team have achieved significant improvements in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. This enables the large majority of pupils to make good and improving progress from their starting points.
- Teachers and teaching assistants plan effectively to meet pupils' needs. They use information on pupils' progress to reflect upon teaching and reconsider how they can best support progress. Teachers identify any underachievement swiftly. They provide effective feedback in line with the school's policy that helps pupils to improve the quality of their work.
- Teachers use research and training to increase their subject knowledge and refine their teaching skills. In many lessons, they model and explain new topics to pupils with clarity and enthusiasm.
- In many instances, teachers use questioning effectively to probe pupils' understanding. In mathematics, pupils across year groups are regularly invited to explain the reasons behind their answers, using correct terminology.
- Teachers have developed classroom environments where pupils are willing to share their answers and opinions and are not deterred if their initial responses are incorrect. In their verbal interactions and in their written comments, teachers encourage pupils to

learn from their mistakes as a vital part of the learning process.

- Teaching assistants provide high levels of support for pupils. They know their pupils well and work closely with them to enhance their learning. Teaching assistants are aware of pupils' attentiveness, knowing when to prompt and when to allow pupils to work independently.
- Teachers have revitalised the reading culture to improve standards of reading. They work with parents to encourage pupils to read at home through the meaningful use of reading journals. In class, pupils read a wider range of texts and have regular opportunities to read independently. At key stage 1 and key stage 2, pupils used effective reading strategies to read clearly to inspectors. The majority of pupils demonstrate highly enthusiastic attitudes to reading.
- At key stage 1 and in the early years, teachers effectively model the links between letters and sounds. This high-quality phonics teaching has enabled the majority of pupils to achieve the required standard in the phonics screening check over time.
- Teachers are developing a range of strategies to develop pupils' mathematical understanding. Pupils often demonstrate a good understanding of arithmetic methods and are routinely invited to explain the reasons behind their answers. In books, there is evidence of more regular access to problem-solving activities and increasing challenge for the most able pupils.
- There is evidence of much support to help pupils plan and sequence their writing. In books, pupils show increasing confidence in writing at length. Teachers regularly invite pupils to improve their spelling and grammatical accuracy. Teachers encourage pupils to use ambitious vocabulary and build from small 'kernels' to more expressive 'popcorn' sentences, with livelier uses of language.
- Teaching is complemented by a range of support and additional interventions that help pupils to make better progress. Recent actions, to diagnose needs and monitor progress, are leading to improving provision and progress for pupils with SEND.
- Teachers are committed to developing pupils' knowledge and understanding in the wider curriculum. In books and in lessons, pupils have regular opportunities to develop good subject knowledge in a range of subjects. In Years 3 and 4 pupils carried out tests to explore whether different rocks were permeable, while in Year 6 pupils accurately used grid references in geography.
- In some instances, there remain some variances in the quality of teaching and assessment where higher expectations are not as successfully implemented and learning routines less effectively managed. There remain occasions where pupils' misconceptions are not clearly addressed.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Staff are mindful of pupils' needs. They have created a culture of mutual respect where pupils feel valued and well supported. Pupils are consistently polite and courteous in the help they provide at breaktimes and lunchtimes and in holding doors open for

others.

- Teachers quickly identify when pupils need additional support. They have established a nurture group to provide pupils with early support to manage behaviour and emotions. This is enabling pupils to successfully engage with learning and wider aspects of school life. Teachers also work with occupational and play therapists to provide customised support for pupils' physical and emotional welfare.
- School leaders are particularly mindful of pupils' social and emotional welfare. The parent support adviser provided pupils and their families with support in a number of sensitive areas, including coping with bereavement. These actions often have a significant effect on the well-being of children and their families.
- Teachers promote a positive learning environment where pupils' achievements are celebrated, often in the presence of their parents. Teachers develop pupils' self-esteem in weekly reward assemblies.
- Pupils are given a range of responsibilities as school council leaders, dining hall helpers and in managing sporting activities in the playground. They develop their social confidence through regular trips and opportunities to interact with visitors.
- Pupils feel that bullying is rare and are very confident that adults would address any unacceptable behaviour.
- Leaders work with pupils to develop an awareness of personal safety. In discussion, pupils showed an awareness of the actions they could take to stay safe online and of the procedures to follow if a possible danger occurred on the school site.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Teachers encourage positive behaviours and routines from the early years onwards. Pupils show care and consideration towards one another and adults. They move around the school site in a calm and orderly manner.
- In lessons and around the school site, the vast majority of pupils behave well. They display positive and enthusiastic attitudes in their learning and in their play. Although the past year saw some instances of exclusion, these are extremely rare, and leaders do much to support pupils in managing their behaviour.
- Pupils value their education and attendance is close to that seen nationally. The parent support adviser works with parents to secure good levels of attendance. Through successful intervention and support, pupils with previously high rates of absence are attending more regularly.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- The concerted actions of leaders and teachers to secure improvements since the last inspection bore fruit in 2018. At key stage 2, pupils made good progress in all subjects and particularly in reading and mathematics. In addition, the proportion of pupils who achieved expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics was well above that seen nationally.
- Teachers' actions to secure better outcomes for the most able pupils were also reflected in 2018 in the increasing proportions of pupils achieving higher levels of

attainment in reading, writing, mathematics and English grammar, punctuation and spelling. Pupils' attainment in these areas was in line with, and frequently better than, that seen nationally.

- The improving picture at key stage 2 was reflected at key stage 1 where the proportions of pupils reaching or exceeding expected standards was in line with or above that seen nationally. This represents strong progress for pupils from their starting points.
- The improvements evident in 2018 are being sustained and are evident across many other year groups. A thorough review of pupils' books demonstrated that high standards continue to be achieved in the vast majority of classes and year groups.
- New strategies and higher expectations are enabling pupils to make much stronger progress in mathematics. Pupils now have regular opportunities to practise their reasoning and problem-solving skills.
- Pupils are keen and increasingly perceptive readers. Teachers have developed pupils' inference and deduction skills, leading to much improved progress in reading across key stages.
- Teachers and teaching assistants support pupils' reading development at key stage 1 and in the early years through the effective teaching of phonics. Despite a slight dip in 2018, the proportions of pupils, over time, achieving the expected standards in the phonics screening check is close to that seen nationally. Pupils used their understanding of the links between letters and sounds to read effectively to inspectors.
- Leaders and teachers have successfully refined their teaching and support to improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. As a result, in key stage 2 disadvantaged pupils made good progress in all subjects in 2018. Although attainment lags behind in some areas, teachers secured significant improvements. This picture is being sustained for current pupils.
- Effective teaching and targeted support are helping pupils with SEND to make good progress in their learning and in their social and emotional development.
- Pupils' improving outcomes in reading, writing and mathematics have not come at the expense of the wider curriculum. Indeed, pupils acquire rich knowledge and insight across a wide range of subjects.
- Through their good and improving academic outcomes, and the actions of teachers to promote their social and emotional development, pupils are very well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Early years provision

Good

- Leaders have significantly enhanced provision in the early years since the previous inspection. Through more effective assessment, planning and teaching, children are making good progress from their starting points. Increasing proportions of children are both reaching good levels of development and exceeding early learning goals.
- Teachers and teaching assistants have established strong routines in the early years to provide an effective structure for learning and play. Teachers build progression into tasks to help children to get the most from their learning. Children rehearsed the

sounds of words before writing small sentences while also being encouraged to consider the meaning of words. Children demonstrated their understanding of the verb 'to creep' by tiptoeing quietly around the class.

- Teachers and teaching assistants provide high levels of care and support in the Nursery. Children settle well through the care and attention they receive. Two-year-old children listened attentively to an enthusiastic reading of 'We're Going on a Bear Hunt', swirling and whirling their arms alongside the teacher. Children in the Nursery also played excitedly in their covered area during the first snow flurry of winter, talking to teaching assistants about the texture and temperature of snowflakes.
- Teachers and teaching assistants have a good picture of children's needs and starting points. They help children to develop their awareness of sounds and letters and are developing their emerging writing skills effectively. Children are encouraged to develop their pencil grip and their letter formation. Examples of children's writing are displayed on walls to encourage a pride in writing from the earliest stage.
- Leaders quickly identify children's learning needs and put effective strategies in place to support their development. Specific initiatives to support children's speech and language development are being introduced with much success.
- Teachers are increasingly successful in securing heightened involvement from parents to support their children's learning and development. Parents receive weekly updates on their children's homework so that they can help them with learning at home.
- In the early years, teachers are attentive to the needs of disadvantaged children. In 2018, a higher proportion of disadvantaged children achieved a good level of development than their peers, with an increasing proportion exceeding early learning goals.
- Leaders have worked with local authority partners to accurately assess the quality of children's work. Teachers and teaching assistants have an accurate view of standards.
- The high standards of planning and strong systems to check progress and quality that characterise much of the school's work are equally apparent in the early years.
- Safeguarding practices are highly effective. The strong safeguarding culture that characterises the school's work is similarly evident in the early years. There are no material breaches of welfare requirements.

School details

Unique reference number	111605
Local authority	Hartlepool Borough
Inspection number	10059043

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	322
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Hammond
Headteacher	Carole Bradley
Telephone number	01429 267038
Website	www.sthelensprimaryschool.co.uk
Email address	admin@sthelensschool.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	9–10 November 2016

Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- A new deputy headteacher and two assistant headteachers have been appointed since the previous inspection.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium is well above average.
- The majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND support is broadly average, although the proportions are above average in some year groups.
- Since the last inspection, provision for two-year-old children has been added to the Nursery.
- The school provides a breakfast club that is run by school staff.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed learning in a wide range of lessons and in all classes. The headteacher and deputy headteacher joined inspectors on a number of these observations.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, senior leaders and middle leaders.
- Inspectors met with eight members of the governing body, including the chair and the vice-chair.
- The inspectors met a senior representative from the local authority.
- The inspectors met groups of pupils and talked to pupils about their learning and experiences at the school in lessons and at lunchtime.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read in different year groups.
- The inspectors carried out an extensive review of pupils' books.
- Inspectors looked at the school's development plans and information on pupils' progress. They also considered arrangements for safeguarding and records relating to attendance and behaviour.
- Inspectors took into account 14 responses to Ofsted's Parent View questionnaire and nine free-text responses from parents. They also considered 101 responses to the pupil questionnaire and 36 responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Malcolm Kirtley, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Angela Whistler	Ofsted Inspector
Dom Brown	Ofsted Inspector

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