

St Helen's Church of England Primary School

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

Inspection dates

5–6 June 2019

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	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Leaders' actions have not yet brought about a consistently good quality of teaching and learning. Pupils' progress is too variable across subjects and year groups.
- Attainment at the end of key stage 1 and key stage 2 remains lower than it should be in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is inconsistent. At times, expectations for pupils' learning are too low.
- In some classes, pupils are completing work in mathematics that adds little value to what they already know.
- Standards in writing are too low. Pupils' skills in spelling, grammar and punctuation are not consistently well developed.
- Over time, pupil premium funding has not been used effectively enough to improve rates of progress for disadvantaged pupils.
- Procedures for dealing with poor behaviour in a minority of classes are not effective.
- Pupils' attendance is improving. However, absence and persistent absence rates remain worse than national averages.
- The curriculum content for many subjects is not planned well enough. Consequently, pupils are not developing their skills and knowledge in subjects other than English and mathematics.
- Some pupils are not making the progress of which they are capable in phonics.
- In the past, governors have not held leaders properly to account for the school's performance.
- Leaders' understanding of how well children in early years are achieving has not been secure. As a result, the standards children achieve vary significantly.

The school has the following strengths

- The decisive action taken by recently appointed senior leaders has brought stability to the school. There are early signs that teaching and learning are improving.
- Leaders ensure that pupils' personal development and welfare are given a high priority. Pupils feel safe and are well cared for.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve leadership and management, by ensuring that:
 - plans to further reduce the differences in outcomes between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils nationally are effective
 - a rich and varied curriculum is in place which develops skills and knowledge across a range of subjects
 - rates of absence and persistent absence continue to reduce
 - assessment procedures in early years are used to provide an accurate overview of how well children are achieving.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across all areas of the school in order to raise standards for all pupils, by:
 - ensuring that teachers across the school have consistently high expectations of what pupils can do
 - moving pupils on to more demanding work in mathematics as soon as they are ready
 - ensuring that teachers have the subject knowledge to teach writing in more depth and with a greater focus on developing pupils' skills
 - making sure that the teaching of phonics supports pupils to become fully secure in their phonics skills
 - developing a consistent approach to managing poor behaviour in lessons, especially in key stage 1, so that pupils are ready to learn
 - ensuring that teaching across the wider curriculum deepens pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Senior leaders are new to their roles and are under no illusion about where the school needs to improve rapidly. They have a clear vision for school improvement. Over a short period of time, the executive headteacher, ably supported by her two deputy headteachers, has implemented plans to address the inconsistencies in teaching and the low standards pupils are attaining. However, it is too early to see the full impact of their efforts.
- The leadership of English and mathematics is now more effective. Leaders demonstrate strong subject knowledge and lead with enthusiasm. The mathematics leader has implemented a range of actions to improve teaching and pupils' progress, which is beginning to have an impact. In just a few weeks, the recently appointed leader for English has begun to gain an accurate grasp of the strengths and weaknesses in the teaching of reading and writing. However, she has had limited time to make improvements to the quality of teaching and learning.
- There is a clear plan for the use of the pupil premium funding. Disadvantaged pupils are now receiving additional support to address their academic, social and emotional needs. However, it is too soon to assess how effective these plans are.
- The breadth and balance of the curriculum are too inconsistent across the school. Although all national curriculum subjects are addressed, the depth to which some subjects are taught, such as history and geography, is too variable.
- Teachers told inspectors that they feel well supported and that they have regular opportunities to attend training. However, the impact of this training is yet to be seen in some year groups for which the quality of teaching is not as good as it should be.
- Leaders support pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively. The school's strong Christian values, such as friendships, truthfulness and forgiveness, underpin its work and reinforce how people should relate to each other. There are close links to the church and pupils have good opportunities to learn about different faiths. Pupils are elected to their different roles by their classmates, which is helping all pupils develop an understanding of democracy.
- The school uses the additional funding to support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) appropriately. Pupils are provided with good classroom support for their academic and emotional and social needs.
- Leaders make effective use of the primary physical education (PE) and sport premium to increase pupils' involvement in physical activity and to develop the skills of staff in teaching PE.
- The academy trust is currently providing more effective support for the school. The recently appointed executive headteacher is a successful headteacher from another school in the trust.

Governance of the school

- In the past, governors and the trust have not been effective in holding senior leaders to account. They have not challenged school leaders sufficiently about weaknesses in pupils' progress and attainment. Governors have relied on the limited information that senior leaders have provided for them to evaluate the school's performance. As a result, they have not had an accurate view of the school's effectiveness and the weaknesses that exist in teaching, learning and assessment.
- More recently, governors and the trust have acted successfully to stabilise the leadership of the school and bring about positive change. Governors are now more aware of the challenges facing the school and work closely with school leaders to drive improvements.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The school has an effective culture of safeguarding. Staff have been trained appropriately and have received up-to-date advice on safeguarding issues. They know how to communicate any concerns promptly to staff responsible for safeguarding, in person and through the school system for logging concerns. Leaders have established effective procedures for investigating concerns and following up issues. Leaders are tenacious in their work with external agencies and ensure that appropriate actions take place to support and safeguard pupils and their families.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- There is too much variability in the quality of teaching across different year groups. While there is evidence of good teaching in the school, some teachers do not have high enough expectations of their pupils. As a result, pupils do not make the progress of which they are capable across the school.
- The teaching of spelling, punctuation and grammar is not systematic enough. Teaching does not equip pupils with the skills they need to punctuate their writing accurately and to spell correctly. Pupils are not taught the skills needed to write at greater depth consistently. Too often, pupils' writing does not engage the reader because it lacks interesting vocabulary and sophisticated grammar techniques. This is limiting the progress pupils make.
- There are weaknesses in the teaching of subjects other than English and mathematics. In some year groups, teachers' subject knowledge is not strong enough and expectations for pupils' learning are too low. As a result, pupils do not develop the knowledge, skills and understanding that they need in these subjects as they move through the school.
- The teaching of phonics in key stage 1 requires improvement because pupils are not acquiring a firm foundation on which to develop their reading skills. Teachers are not ensuring pupils are confident with the sounds that letters represent or planning activities that build on previous learning.
- Most pupils develop a secure understanding of the basic skills they require in

mathematics. In some year groups, especially in Years 5 and 6, pupils are challenged to use these skills to think more deeply about the mathematics they are using. However, in some year groups, pupils spend too much time completing work that they already know how to do. This limits the progress that pupils make as they move through the school.

- The approach to reading is improving because of the concerted efforts of the recently appointed leader for English. Older pupils especially are now reading more challenging texts and completing activities that are beginning to develop their comprehension skills.
- Pupils' presentation and handwriting are inconsistent across classes. Work in pupils' books is sometimes untidy and lacks care and attention. However, when expectations are high, pupils' work is well presented and its quality is good.
- Teaching assistants provide effective support for pupils, particularly for those pupils with SEND.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are keen to take on additional responsibilities. There are several groups of which pupils are proud to be a part. For example, the faith team helps with assemblies and religious events and the eco-councillors focus on making the school a more eco-friendly environment.
- Pupils have good opportunities to attend a range of after-school clubs, such as for gymnastics, dance and basketball. A breakfast club is available for all pupils each morning which sets the pupils up for the day. A range of playground equipment promotes healthy lifestyles through active games. Pupils in key stage 2 learn to swim.
- Leaders provide pupils with rich personal development experiences. For example, a gold medal Olympic athlete visited the school to talk to pupils about perseverance. Older pupils attend an outdoor pursuit centre each year where they learn team-building skills.
- Pupils who made their views known had a good understanding of how to stay safe when working online. They knew the importance of not sharing personal information and how they should share any concerns with their parents or a trusted adult.
- Pupils are happy and feel safe in school. They are well looked after by staff and take care of one another.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Current leaders are taking action to address pupils' low attendance. As a result, attendance is improving. However, absence and persistent absence remain worse than national averages.
- Although pupils are well behaved in most lessons, some pupils in key stage 1 are not

as engaged in their learning as they need to be. Where learning does not meet their needs, there are instances of low-level disruption which is limiting the progress they make and that of others.

- Pupils say that bullying is now rare. They say that this is because staff listen to them and address their concerns and that staff really care for them.
- When moving around the school, in the dining hall, during assembly and on the playground, pupils are mostly well behaved. They are friendly and courteous to each other and adults.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Since the previous inspection, the proportion of pupils achieving the expected and higher standards in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 1 and key stage 2 has been below the national average. As a result, pupils are not well prepared for their next stages of education.
- Inspectors saw signs of improvement in pupils' books in some classes. However, the overall progress that current pupils are making in English, mathematics and subjects across the curriculum is not strong enough.
- The proportion of pupils meeting the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check in 2018 showed a sharp decline to well below national averages. Inspection evidence suggests that current pupils are making progress but not sufficiently to rapidly improve standards.
- Standards across the curriculum are low. Coverage of subjects other than English and mathematics is weak. Learning is not planned carefully enough to ensure that pupils develop subject-specific skills and knowledge.
- In 2018, disadvantaged pupils in Year 6 made stronger progress than in previous years, and the proportion attaining the expected and higher standards also improved. However in key stage 1, the proportion of disadvantaged pupils attaining the expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics was significantly below other pupils.
- The most able pupils do not make enough progress. In some classes, expectations of what they can achieve are too low. As a result, too few most-able pupils, including those most-able pupils who are disadvantaged, reach their potential in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Pupils with SEND are supported well to help them overcome social, emotional and physical barriers to learning. Available information indicates that these pupils are making adequate progress.

Early years provision

Requires improvement

- A minority of children enter early years with knowledge and skills below those typical for their age. Currently, children's progress varies and some are not making the progress of which they are capable. As a result, the proportion of children ready for learning in Year 1 is currently lower than it should be.
- Leadership of early years needs further development. Over time, there has been an

inaccurate view of how well children are achieving. This has been addressed by senior leaders. However, some inconsistencies remain.

- In both the Nursery and Reception classes, adults engage well with children and support them in their learning. However, sometimes activities lack challenge, particularly for the most able children. They do not deepen children's understanding and extend their thinking sufficiently.
- Relationships between adults and children are positive and caring. Adults know children well and provide them with the support and guidance they need to develop into confident learners. Adults ensure that children are safe and look after them well.
- The teaching of phonics is stronger in early years than elsewhere in the school. Teachers and teaching assistants reinforce children's understanding of known sounds and encourage them to tackle others that are not so familiar.
- Disadvantaged children who are currently in early years are making similar progress to that of their peers.
- The indoor learning environment provides children with rich opportunities to learn from activities they have chosen to do as well as from planned group sessions. The outside play area also provides a range of interesting and stimulating learning opportunities, such as the water area, where children's understanding of numbers is developed.
- Children's behaviour is good; they play and learn happily with each other and share resources willingly. Children show resilience and sustained concentration when accessing the different learning activities.
- Children are kept safe, and their welfare, health and well-being are given high priority. The site is secure, and effective policies and procedures make sure that children are kept safe from harm.
- Staff communicate with parents well. Parents are appreciative of the information they receive about how well their children are doing and what they are learning.

School details

Unique reference number	139573
Local authority	Wakefield
Inspection number	10087564

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	225
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Father Robert Hart
Executive Headteacher	Louise Sennett
Telephone number	01977 617955
Website	www.st-helens.wakefield.sch.uk
Email address	headteacher@st-helens.wakefield.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	25–26 April 2017

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The school is governed by Enhance Academy Trust. Some governance functions are delegated to the local governing body.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils who are known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium funding is above average.
- The early years includes a Nursery class where children attend part time.
- The school provides a breakfast club each morning for pupils.
- The current executive headteacher and her two deputy headteachers were not in post at the previous inspection.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in all classes. Lessons were observed jointly with senior leaders.
- A sample of pupils' work from all classes was scrutinised.
- Inspectors listened to a selection of pupils read from all year groups.
- Meetings were held with pupils, the executive headteacher, senior leaders, other staff, six members of the governing body, the chief executive of the trust and the school's improvement partner.
- Inspectors observed pupils moving around the school, including on the playgrounds, during breaks, in the dining hall and during a school assembly.
- Inspectors scrutinised a number of documents, including the school's self-evaluation of its overall effectiveness, school improvement plans, attendance records and safeguarding information.
- Inspectors took account of the eight responses to Ofsted's online pupil survey, the two responses to the staff survey, the 22 responses to Ofsted's online parent questionnaire, Parent View, and 14 free-text responses to Parent View.
- Inspectors spoke informally with parents at the start of the school day.

Inspection team

Alan Chaffey, lead inspector

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