

Inspection of St Helen's Primary Academy

St Helen's Way, Monk Bretton, Barnsley S71 2PS

Inspection dates: 14–15 January 2020

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Early years provision

Requires improvement

Previous inspection grade

Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

Leaders are improving this school. They know that the quality of education is not good enough. Many parents and carers are happy with the changes that leaders are making. However, a few parents are very unhappy.

Several teachers have left since the last inspection. Other teachers have been off school for a long time. This means that some pupils have had lots of different teachers. Pupils say that this is unsettling. They say that teachers sometimes give them work that is too easy.

Some pupils do not behave as well as they should. This distracts other pupils from their learning. Sometimes a few pupils are violent and hurt others. This is happening much less often than it did. Bullying sometimes happens, but leaders act quickly to stop this.

A special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) from another school is working at St Helen's temporarily. She started last October for a day a week. This increased to two days a week in January. The temporary SENCo has reviewed plans for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Pupils with SEND are starting to make better progress now that their individual needs have been identified accurately.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Children are happy and settled in early years. Leaders have invested in new resources to improve the learning environment inside and outdoors. This helps children to learn while they are playing. Some children already have lots of knowledge and skills when they come into Nursery and Reception Years. Leaders know that, when children's starting points are high, they could be achieving even more.

The multi-academy trust has designed a new curriculum, which was introduced last September. Leaders are developing the skills of middle leaders so that they can start to lead different subjects. This work has only just begun.

The government gives extra money to schools to help them improve physical education (PE). Leaders have not used this funding effectively. Leaders have written a new plan to improve PE. Governors did not publish the sport premium plan on the school's website before this inspection. Some parents told inspectors that pupils do not always get PE lessons. If PE lessons do happen, they are not high quality, so pupils do not enjoy them. This is not helping pupils to develop active lifestyles, so it is limiting their personal development. There are not enough after-school clubs to help pupils try different sporting activities or competitions.

Children are getting off to a good start learning phonics in early years. Most pupils in Year 1 and Year 2 are learning to read as well as they should for their age. Pupils who find reading more difficult are not catching up quickly. This is because they are not practising their reading often enough. Some teachers hear pupils read regularly, but this varies.

The multi-academy trust has planned the mathematics curriculum. Teachers are following this. However, some teachers do not give pupils opportunities to apply their mathematical knowledge to reasoning and solving problems often enough. Pupils do not get enough opportunities to practise using their skills and knowledge in mathematics.

Pupils cannot remember geographical facts that they have been taught. Pupils' locational knowledge and their understanding of physical geography is limited. Pupils struggle to use a map to locate countries or mountains. Leaders plan to develop teachers' subject knowledge so that they are more confident teaching all subjects.

Learning is sometimes disrupted by poor behaviour. Sometimes this is because teaching is not interesting enough, and pupils are bored. Some pupils' behaviour is unacceptable. Leaders have provided training to help teachers calm pupils down. The number of incidents of unacceptable behaviour has reduced since teachers' behaviour management skills have improved. The temporary SENCo has also given teachers ideas to support those pupils with SEND who have social and emotional needs.

Leaders have improved pupils' personal development by introducing special 'drop-down days' that enrich children's learning. Pupils have a secure understanding of equality and diversity. They studied moral issues during Black History Month, learning about segregation. Pupils understand the difference between right and wrong.

A high proportion of the 17 parents who responded to Ofsted's survey gave negative feedback. Inspectors spoke to 19 parents, and almost all of them gave very positive feedback about the school. They know that the changes leaders are making are necessary to ensure that their children get a good quality of education in the future.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders make all the necessary recruitment checks to ensure that staff are suitable to work with children. Leaders refer pupils to social services quickly when necessary.

The SENCo has written medical health care and personal evacuation plans for pupils who need them. Leaders write risk assessments to support pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs who may hurt themselves or others. Specialist teachers from the local authority have trained staff to make sure that teachers are getting better at meeting these pupils' additional needs.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have improved the quality of the curriculum by providing a structure for teachers to follow. However, not all teachers are following these curriculum plans consistently. Teachers have gaps in their own subject knowledge. Leaders should continue to provide training to improve teachers' subject knowledge in all subjects. Leaders should check that all teachers are following the curriculum plans consistently.
- Leaders have improved the teaching of early reading and phonics. They have invested in new reading books that pupils can read. Some teachers hear pupils read regularly so that pupils can practise using their phonics skills. This is increasing pupils' fluency and confidence and helping them to learn to love reading. This is not always the case. Leaders should check to make sure that all teachers are hearing pupils read as often as leaders have decided they should.
- Leaders have successfully improved pupils' behaviour and attitudes, but further improvements are needed. Some pupils' behaviour still disrupts learning. Leaders should continue to train teachers so that they have the skills that they need to further reduce pupils' wilful disruption. Leaders should implement the curriculum to ensure that teachers are providing work that is interesting and hard enough to engage pupils' interests, reducing low-level disruption in lessons.
- Leaders should improve the curriculum for pupils' personal development by ensuring that pupils develop an understanding of how to keep physically healthy and maintain an active lifestyle. Leaders should ensure that teachers provide sufficient opportunity for pupils to be physically active in the school, including having PE lessons every week.
- Leaders have successfully improved the teaching of early reading and mathematics in Nursery Year and Reception Year. Improvements to the curriculum for the other areas of learning within the 'Statutory framework for the early years foundation stage' are at an earlier stage of development. Leaders should continue to improve the curriculum to ensure consistency across all areas of learning and improve outcomes for the most able children.
- The headteacher has worked tirelessly to improve the school and this is working. The recently appointed assistant headteacher is providing effective support. However, the quality of education is not yet good. Senior leaders should continue to build the knowledge and skills of middle leaders so that they can become effective subject leaders.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use Ofsted Parent View information when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

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.

School details

Unique reference number	139006
Local authority	Barnsley
Inspection number	10121717
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	258
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	David Hall
Headteacher	Vikki Lewis
Website	https://sites.google.com/a/aetinet.org/st-helens-primary-academy/home
Date of previous inspection	28 November 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The last section 5 inspection took place on 21 September 2017. The school was judged as requires improvement.
- A new headteacher took up post in June 2018.
- Ofsted conducted a requires improvement monitoring inspection in November 2018. Leaders were judged not to be taking effective action at that time.
- This school has falling rolls. It remains average in size.
- A new assistant headteacher was appointed in 2019.
- This school is sponsored by the Academies Enterprise Trust.
- Trustees delegate educational strategy, governance, executive leadership and school improvement to the national director of education and the local governing body.
- The governing body had not ensured that the school's website complied with all the statutory information that should be published. Leaders rectified this over the course of this inspection.

- The governing body consists of employees or ex-employees of the multi-academy trust exclusively.

Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- We met the headteacher, the assistant headteacher, the early years leader and the SENCo. Subject leaders were represented by the regional English and mathematics leaders for the multi-academy trust. We also met staff who maintain records of recruitment checks and safeguarding leaders.
- We met the multi-academy trust's national director for primary and SEND.
- We met two governors: the chair of the governing body and another governor.
- We did deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics, geography and science. We spoke to pupils about their learning and heard pupils read. We visited lessons and discussed pupils' work with leaders, alongside the curriculum plans for deep-dive subjects. We discussed pupils' learning with teachers, following visits to their lessons.
- We spoke to pupils and staff at breakfast club, at breaktime and at lunchtime. We also spoke to pupils in separate focus groups.
- We evaluated documentation, including the school improvement plan, records of behaviour and exclusions, and safeguarding records. We also reviewed complaints made by parents and evaluated leaders' response to these complaints.
- We considered 19 verbal responses from parents along with the 17 responses left by parents through Ofsted's Parent View survey. There were no responses from staff or pupils to Ofsted's surveys of their views.

Inspection team

Tracey Ralph, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Matthew Knox	Ofsted Inspector
Larissa Thorpe	Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

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