

Inspection of St Helen's Primary School

Colne Road, Bluntisham, Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire PE28 3NY

Inspection dates: 8 and 9 June 2022

Overall effectiveness	Good
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The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy at this welcoming village school. They enjoy learning and playing together. Playtimes are calm and happy. Pupils play together kindly. They say, 'the teachers are kind and everyone is nice'.

Pupils feel safe. They understand what bullying is but say it rarely happens. They are confident that adults would stop any bullying straight away.

Pupils behave sensibly in lessons. They respond well to adults' high expectations. Pupils are keen to learn and do well. They listen carefully to their teachers and follow instructions straight away. They concentrate on their work. They are confident to share their ideas and listen to each other. They reflect on how to improve their own work and generously praise the work of others.

Pupils have many opportunities to express themselves. They love to read and chat in 'the nest'. Older pupils organise clubs for younger pupils. Pupils take part eagerly in dance workshops. Their enthusiastic singing is delightful. They produce artwork using lots of different resources such as clay, paint and computer software.

Pupils learn about different religions, cultures and ways of life. They are tolerant, respectful and kind.

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

Leaders are ambitious for all pupils. They have established a broad curriculum for all pupils, starting with the youngest children in the early years. For example, in mathematics, the youngest children are given lots of well-considered opportunities to learn counting and simple calculation skills. This ensures that they are ready for Year 1 and beyond, as they are required to apply their learning in more-complex ways.

Teachers deliver the school's chosen reading programme very effectively. Pupils quickly develop their phonic knowledge and apply this learning with increasing independence. Books are well matched to the sounds that pupils know and are learning. Adults regularly check on what pupils know and can do. As soon as teachers identify any pupils who need extra help, this is put in place. Consequently, pupils are quickly reading accurately and fluently.

Pupils talk with great enthusiasm about the books they are reading. They love to hear their teachers read stories aloud, such as 'Beowulf'. Pupils enjoy creating their own stories and books, and these are displayed proudly in the school's library. Reading is enjoyed at playtimes too, with attractive and engaging books in 'the nest'.

Curriculum planning and staff training ensure that most areas of the curriculum are delivered effectively. For example, in design and technology, children in the early years experiment and build with a range of materials while older pupils design and make vehicles with progressively more complex mechanisms. Older pupils talk enthusiastically about how they use skills they have learned previously when tackling new projects. In a few subjects, this planning and training is not as well developed. Leadership monitoring in these subjects is also less well established.

Teachers know their pupils well. They plan interesting activities, and pupils respond with enthusiasm. Adults select and teach vocabulary carefully throughout the school. Pupils quickly learn and apply new words. For example, younger pupils can discuss brush control techniques and colour blending following explanation by their teacher. From the early years, pupils behave responsibly in lessons and carry out tasks diligently. Pupils take pride in their work and present it to a high standard.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) get the help they need in a timely way. Leaders identify any needs early for pupils, and check regularly on how these pupils are faring. Leaders work closely with families and professionals to understand the challenges for pupils with the highest level of need. Plans for these pupils are detailed and precise. Teachers are well trained to support individual pupils' needs.

Leaders seek out ways to enrich the curriculum for pupils. Pupils enjoy a wide range of practical workshops such as drumming. Visits by authors and artists enthuse pupils and broaden career aspirations. Pupils can develop their interests and talents through after-school clubs such as sewing or animation club. Pupils learn how to stay safe online. They learn how to be safe out of school through extra opportunities such as 'Bikeability'. They stay healthy with regular exercise such as lunchtime dance and athletics club.

Governors take their statutory responsibilities seriously and are developing their strategic role. Staff feel well supported by leaders. They appreciate the concern for their well-being. Parents are also appreciative of school leaders.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Safeguarding is taken seriously. Staff are vigilant in their work with pupils. They know and follow school systems to report their concerns. Leaders use this information to ensure that pupils and families get the help they need. They act rapidly to keep pupils safe. They work effectively with a range of external agencies. The curriculum is adjusted to address local safeguarding priorities.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a few subjects, curriculum plans, staff training, and leaders' monitoring are less well developed. Plans lack precise detail, staff do not deliver these subjects as effectively, and leaders do not know as much about how pupils are faring. Leaders should ensure that learning in these subjects is carefully sequenced, staff are confident to deliver the intended curriculum, and leaders have effective systems to monitor the delivery of these subjects.

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 information from Ofsted Parent View 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	110888
Local authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	10227305
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	169
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Matthew Sampson
Headteacher	Julia Walker
Website	www.sthelensprimary.org
Date of previous inspection	5 – 6 June 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- This is a smaller-than-average primary school.
- The school does not use any off-site alternative education providers.

Information about this inspection

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

- This is the first routine inspection since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school, and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspectors held meetings with senior leaders, including the headteacher and governors.
- The inspectors also spoke to other leaders, staff, pupils and the school's effectiveness partner from Cambridgeshire.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, art and design and modern foreign languages. For each deep dive the inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a

sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. In early reading this took the form of listening to pupils read to a familiar adult.

- An inspector spoke to parents when pupils were being collected from school. The inspectors also spoke to pupils in the lunch hall and in the playground.
- As part of the evaluation of the school's safeguarding processes, the inspectors reviewed the school's single central record and met with the designated safeguarding lead.
- An inspector reviewed a range of school documents, including the school development plan, curriculum plans and school policies.
- An inspector reviewed the 102 responses that were submitted by parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View, and also considered the 48 free-text responses from parents. The inspector also considered 28 responses to the Ofsted staff survey and 68 responses to the pupil survey.

Inspection team

Lynne Williams, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Simon Harbrow

Ofsted Inspector

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