

Inspection of St Helen's C E Primary School

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

Inspection dates: 7 and 8 February 2023

Overall effectiveness	Good
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?

St Helen's Church of England Primary School broadens pupils' horizons and ignites their curiosity in learning. From the youngest to the oldest pupils in school, all are welcomed into the family that is 'St Helen's'. Pupils are enthusiastic and want to learn. The high ambition staff have for all pupils is clear to see in lessons. The early years foundation stage provides a vibrant, well-planned start to children's learning. From the first days in nursery, teachers place an emphasis on respect and manners. As pupils move through school, these values stay with them.

Pupils feel able to talk to staff should they have worries or concerns. Bullying is not common. However, when it does happen, pupils report that staff are quick to act and stop it. In class and at playtimes, pupils get along well with each other. They enjoy working as a team and can communicate their ideas clearly to each other. For example, in class, before asking for help from the teacher, pupils ask their peers for support. Pupils enjoy helping each other.

Leaders provide a range of opportunities for pupils to develop their interests and talents. Pupils spoke with excitement about the recent trip to the theatre to see 'Charlie and the Chocolate Factory'.

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

If you are a pupil at St Helen's, then you are a reader. Reading is part of the DNA of the school. Reading begins in the first days of school in the early years and is never left behind as pupils progress to the end of Year 6. Through a well-informed and considered approach, leaders and staff have cultivated a passion for reading in the school. The whole-school texts allow the pupils in Year 6 to talk to the very youngest pupils about the book they are all reading. The characters and storyline give the Year 5 and Year 6 pupils a conversation starter when they are acting as 'buddy' readers for younger pupils.

Leaders pay particular attention to the development of language and communication skills in the early years. The engagement between staff and children is meaningful. It gives children the time to think and reflect on their own learning. The staff know the children very well in the nursery and in the early years. This encourages appropriate support which is well matched to children's individual needs. This guidance and the effective teaching of a well-thought-out curriculum ensure that the children are ready for key stage 1. The inside and outside provision in the early years includes different areas of learning which allow pupils to apply what they have been taught. For example, children accurately apply measuring and counting from mathematics in construction and creative areas.

Leaders have designed a curriculum that is broad, balanced and relevant to their pupils. The essential knowledge and important vocabulary in different subjects are clear. Teachers have strong subject knowledge.

Staff appreciate the well-planned professional development leaders provide. Subject leaders visit lessons regularly to evaluate the effectiveness of the curriculum. This allows support and the identification of strong practice to take place.

Staff use assessment effectively to address pupils' misconceptions in lessons. However, leaders and teachers do not have a clear understanding of what the pupils have retained in their long-term memory. The assessment of whether knowledge is secure needs further development.

Support for pupils who have additional needs is well planned. Leaders are nimble and quick to adapt to the needs of their children. They ensure there is no lost learning when specific support takes place away from the whole class. Communication of pupils' needs to appropriate staff is efficient. Staff who work with pupils regularly, appreciate being well-informed about their needs. Leaders welcome suggestions and feedback from staff in relation to pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Leaders use the information to inform future planning and support.

Staff and pupils clearly understand the expectations for behaviour. Through training, leaders have ensured that staff are able to deal effectively with pupils when their behaviour does not meet the expectations set out. Leaders monitor pupils' attendance and punctuality meticulously. This allows actions and support to be implemented. Improvements in attendance and behaviour have been made. Rewards for high attendance engage families and pupils well. While pupils' overall attendance is strong, there are a proportion of pupils who are absent too often.

Pupils have a strong understanding of democracy and the rule of law. They demonstrate a mature understanding of people's differences and value the views of each other. Leaders have put in place a structured personal development curriculum. Visiting speakers, such as those from the police, and planned assemblies support the curriculum. Clubs are well attended and are enjoyed by the broad majority of pupils.

Governors, leaders from the trust and staff work together to ensure a reflective and honest approach to the quality of education provided in school. Governors have a diverse skill set which allows a robust consideration of strategic decisions. Staff enjoy working at the school and feel extremely well supported, personally and professionally.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Pupils feel safe. Leaders ensure that staff have regular training and updates on safeguarding. Safer recruitment training is up to date and is applied consistently when recruiting staff.

Governors have specific safeguarding training which allows them to support processes and policies that are applied to help protect pupils from risk, harm or neglect. The staff clearly understand their responsibilities in relation to the care of pupils. They know how and when to report concerns about a pupil.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The arrangements to assess and check what pupils know and remember require further refinement. Currently, some teachers are unclear whether pupils have understood and can apply new learning well enough. Leaders should ensure that all staff have a good understanding of, and consistently apply, the school's assessment policy so that pupils' gaps in learning are identified and corrected.
- Too many pupils are persistently absent from school. Pupils miss important aspects of learning. Leaders must ensure the rate of persistent absence is reduced swiftly and sustainably.

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.

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	139573
Local authority	Wakefield
Inspection number	10255757
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	247
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Peter Townley
Headteacher	Louise Sennett
Website	www.sthelensceprimary.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	29 June 2021, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is one of 10 schools in the Enhance Academy Trust.
- The school does not use alternative provision.
- The school has before- and after-school provision.
- As the school is designated as having a religious character, it is inspected under section 48 of the Education Act 2005. The last section 48 inspection of the school was in January 2016. The timescales for reinspection have been extended because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Information about this inspection

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

- This was the second routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors conducted deep dives in the following subjects: early reading, mathematics, science and design technology. For each deep dive, inspectors met with curriculum leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Meetings were held with the chief executive, the executive headteacher, the head of school, trustees, governors, senior leaders, the early years leader, the special educational needs coordinator, subject leaders teachers and administrative staff.
- An inspector met with the designated safeguarding lead. The single central record of recruitment checks was scrutinised. Inspectors reviewed the school safeguarding records.
- Inspectors visited the early years separately, in addition to lesson visits linked to deep dives.
- The responses to Ofsted surveys for pupils, staff and parents were also considered.

Inspection team

Richard Jones, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Jenni Machin

Ofsted Inspector

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