

Inspection of St Helen's Primary Academy

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

Inspection dates: 23 and 24 January 2024

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| 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 |

The principal of this school is Victoria Gorton. This school is part of Academies Enterprise Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Rebecca Boomer-Clark, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by David Hall.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are proud to be part of this highly inclusive school. Leaders have established a set of values based on 'excellent attitudes, knowledge and teaching'. These values galvanise staff to provide the best possible education for pupils. Pupils are inspired to live out these values through their conduct and attitudes towards learning. St Helen's Primary Academy is a friendly and happy place to learn.

The recently established leadership team has implemented a curriculum that helps pupils to secure a deep knowledge of the subjects that they study. For example, pupils shared their impressive understanding across a number of subjects, including the reasons behind Viking raids and the role of trade during this period in history.

Adults help pupils to manage their own feelings and to behave well. Leaders have established a behaviour ladder to help pupils to understand what adults expect of them. Staff apply this consistently. As a result, pupils behave well most of the time. When behaviour slips, staff immediately help pupils to get back on track. This means that pupils can focus on their learning, with few distractions.

Leaders make sure that pupils and families understand why attending school is important. Staff provide lots of support to help pupils attend every day. This is making a positive difference to pupils.

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

The school has established an ambitious curriculum that supports all pupils well. This curriculum is implemented consistently by all staff. In early years, children develop their understanding of the past by learning about themselves and their local area. This helps them to secure their understanding of chronology before studying other important periods in history. For example, pupils explained in detail the context of Magna Carta and its impact on Britain. In early years, adults help children develop their mathematical skills by giving them lots of opportunities to explore number. Leaders have made sure that the curriculum supports all pupils to become increasingly fluent mathematicians. Teachers respond consistently to the misconceptions that pupils might have. However, in some subjects, including mathematics, pupils have gaps in their knowledge from previous years. Pupils do not have enough opportunities to address these gaps, and this can make it difficult for them to learn new ideas.

The education that pupils are now receiving is not reflected in the weaker outcomes achieved by Year 6 pupils in 2023. These pupils were adversely affected by the disruption caused by the pandemic. They did not have the time to benefit from some of the significant improvements that the school has made to the quality of education.

The school has made reading a priority. Staff get the training that they need to help pupils to learn to read. In early years, adults help children to get off to a flying start

by learning phonics and beginning to read simple words. When pupils struggle to read, skilled adults provide exactly the right support to help them to catch up. Adults have selected a range of high-quality books for pupils to enjoy. Leaders have made sure that improving pupils' language and vocabulary is a golden thread that runs through the whole curriculum. The school's work to broaden pupils' vocabulary is exemplary. This has a very positive impact on pupils' confidence to read. One pupil summed this up by saying, 'When my teacher hears me read, it makes me feel brave to do my reading.'

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) learn the same ambitious curriculum as their peers. Leaders have made sure that all teachers successfully adapt learning to meet a wide range of needs. Pupils with SEND are flourishing as a result.

In early years, staff help children to build positive relationships. Children cooperate consistently well with each other. Skilled adults encourage children to use new vocabulary and extend their talk. Pupils show consistently positive attitudes towards their learning. They are able to concentrate well in order to complete the activities that they are given. However, some of the activities that the school provides for children to do are not helping them to deepen their learning well enough.

The curriculum for personal, social, health and economic education helps pupils to understand how to stay safe when online. Pupils know when personal information should not be shared. Adults also make sure that pupils learn about the diverse world that they live in. This inspires pupils to treat each other with respect and to accept each other's differences. The school makes sure that pupils have a range of activities to help develop their talents and interests. For example, pupils take part in badminton sessions, while others attend yoga and the football club.

Those responsible for governance are extremely knowledgeable about the school. They check that leaders' actions impact positively on pupils. The trust provides highly effective support and professional development for staff. The workload and well-being of all staff are priorities. Staff are proud to work at this school. They are inspired by the considerable difference that their work makes to the lives of all pupils.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Pupils have some gaps in their knowledge from previous years across a number of subjects. This means that pupils lack some of the prior knowledge that they need in order to build new learning. The school should make sure that pupils are

given opportunities to address these gaps so that they have the knowledge and skills they need to help them to learn new knowledge and concepts.

- In early years, some activities that children are given to do are not focused closely enough on the knowledge, skills and behaviours that they need to learn. This means that sometimes, pupils are completing tasks that do not sufficiently deepen their learning. The school should make sure that the activities children are given provide better opportunities for them to learn more deeply.

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' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

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| Unique reference number | 139006 |
| Local authority | Barnsley |
| Inspection number | 10290220 |
| 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 | 208 |
| Appropriate authority | Board of trustees |
| Chair of trust | David Hall |
| Principal | Victoria Gorton |
| Website | www.sites.google.com/a/aetinet.org/st-helens-primary-academy/home |
| Date of previous inspection | 11 May 2021, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 |

Information about this school

- This is an average-sized primary school.
- The school runs a breakfast club for pupils.
- The school does not make use of alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

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

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with senior leaders, subject leaders and teachers. The lead inspector held an additional meeting with curriculum leaders.

- The lead inspector held a meeting with a representative of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of the trust.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in reading, mathematics, history and physical education. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The lead inspector also listened to a sample of pupils reading to a familiar adult.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of other documentation, including minutes of meetings of the governors and leaders' evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors also spoke informally to pupils to gather their views on school life.
- To gather parents' views, inspectors took account of the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including free-text comments.
- To gather the views of staff, inspectors took account of the staff survey.

Inspection team

Jen Sloan, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

John Davie

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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