

# St Helen's Church of England Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	113446
<b>Local Authority</b>	Devon
<b>Inspection number</b>	289630
<b>Inspection date</b>	2 May 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Janet Simms

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	147
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Carole Wawrychuk
<b>Headteacher</b>	Kim Baker
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	30 April 2001
<b>School address</b>	Abbotsham Bideford EX39 5AP
<b>Telephone number</b>	01237 475276
<b>Fax number</b>	01237 476445

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<b>Age group</b>	4–11
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

This five-class primary school is in its third year of occupying new buildings in the centre of Abbotsham, near Bideford. Almost all pupils are from White British backgrounds. Pupils often attend the playgroup in the church hall next door before they enter the school in September. All classes include mixed year groups. The proportion of pupils leaving and entering the school during different years is high, particularly in Years 3 to 6.

## Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

St Helen's is a good school where standards have been rising in recent years and pupils achieve well. Its religious nature is central to planning, which partly accounts for pupils' excellent personal development, particularly their good spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding. Strong pastoral care and good academic support and guidance lead to pupils feeling confident, safe and secure. Most pupils enjoy school, whether they join later than Reception, or have been here throughout. Pupils are healthy and fit and well able to talk about themselves and their work happily. They move on to secondary education with secure skills and the confidence to do well.

Pupils make an excellent start in Reception, progressing quickly and entering Year 1 with good skills, knowledge and understanding. Good progress continues to Year 2 where standards are above average. Year 3 already has eight new pupils filling spaces during this year, an example of pupil mobility which continues to Year 6, and which was similar last year. This presents increasing challenges to school planning. Pupils' progress is tracked, but the system does not provide sufficiently detailed information for staff to be sure that different groups of pupils – these late entrants for example – are progressing similarly well. The Year 6 test results dipped in 2006, particularly in science, partly because tracking did not identify potential underachievement by higher attaining pupils early enough. Improvements are already leading to earlier interventions and the current Year 6 standards are broadly average, with good skills in speaking and listening. They are now on track to achieve or exceed their targets.

Teaching and learning are good. New entrants integrate quickly, rapidly making friends and rising to teachers' high expectations of behaviour and commitment to their work. Evaluation of this consistently good teaching as yet lacks sufficient focus on pupils' achievement. A good, newly planned curriculum ensures that pupils learn key skills and knowledge well and apply these to a variety of interesting cross-curricular themes. Provision of computers is now good and school planning includes key priorities to improve staff's use of these and the electronic whiteboards in their teaching.

Leadership and management are good. Accurate self-evaluation recognises outstanding areas of provision and has properly identified most of the areas for development. Staff have carefully extended useful partnerships further afield than the immediate locality, to provide a good range of experiences which widen pupils' horizons. Significant improvement since the last inspection demonstrates the school's good capacity to improve further.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the tracking of pupils' achievement to ensure the equal progress of different groups, particularly in respect of the increasing numbers of pupils who enter school during different years.
- Develop stronger focus on pupils' achievement in the monitoring and evaluation of teaching.
- Implement plans to improve teachers' creative use of computers and interactive whiteboards in their lessons.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 2

Achievement is good. Pupils enter the school with skills and understanding broadly similar to those found nationally, with strengths in areas such as communication. They make very good progress through Reception and now move into Year 1 with above average attainment, which has not always been the case. Recent staffing appointments, including extra teaching assistants, have improved provision in the Foundation Stage. This is now outstanding.

The school agrees with some parents who recognise difficulties in provision for Year 1. The minority who remain with reception pupils have restricted space in which to work separately, limiting what they can realistically do because of noise disturbance. The school plans to improve accommodation arrangements to reduce this. Standards at Year 2 have recently risen steadily and are above average. Pupils make good progress to Year 2 and writing has improved significantly.

With so many leavers and newcomers, the pupils who take Year 6 tests are not the same groups who took tests at Year 2. In all years, pupils often leave, mostly because of parents' relocation, or for independent education and gaps fill quickly with pupils of all abilities. Even so, pupils have achieved well to Year 6 and those who take national tests this year are on track to achieve or exceed the standards expected. Standards dipped to average in 2006; those pupils achieved satisfactorily from below average attainment at the age of seven. Higher attaining pupils did not achieve as well as expected in science, which mainly accounted for this dip.

Pupil mobility has again been unusually high in the current Year 6, with several pupils joining during this year. The core of pupils who started and will finish in the school have achieved well and all pupils are on track to achieve or exceed their targets. Planned absences, for example for holidays, mean that some pupils miss national tests, so do not achieve the results that indicate their current standards. Achievement in art was a strength at the last inspection and standards remain high.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development is outstanding. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding develops particularly strongly. Links with an ethnically diverse school in Exeter, for example, help pupils to understand cultures different from their own. Pupils and parents value the strong religious principles and expectations underpinning all the school's work. Newcomers are welcomed into classes and pupils make it easy for them to settle in and learn well. Pupils treat each other with respect, listening effectively to others and attentively to teachers in lessons.

Attendance is satisfactory, though many miss time because of unhelpful term-time holidays which the school actively discourages. Pupils arrive punctually, so lessons start promptly. The majority of pupils enjoy school greatly. They feel very safe in school and report 'no bullying'. Pupils understand how to keep fit and healthy, but some, and their parents, would welcome more sports opportunities. Behaviour is exceptionally good and most pupils talk with confidence and pleasure about their work.

Pupils develop good levels of independence and contribute very effectively to day-to-day activities. They are keen to take responsibility in the school, to participate in village events and

to contribute to the well-being of the wider world. They raise money for charities for instance and support a child in Goa.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teaching and learning are good. 'All teachers are good at teaching and know what you need', one pupil remarked. Long and shorter term planning are much better than at the time of the last inspection. This leads to good achievement because work is matched well to the needs of groups and individual pupils, including those with learning difficulties. This important feature ensures that different year groups in classes now progress properly across subjects. Teaching staff and assistants work effectively together, using their skills to good effect with different groups in lessons.

Pupils display very good attitudes in class because work is interesting, giving them lots of opportunity to talk about their ideas and listen to others before they write, for example. They enjoy using computers and when teachers use the electronic whiteboards.

Accurate, regular assessment results in teachers knowing how well individuals are progressing. Subsequent planning, including placements into different classes, is properly grounded in this assessment of achievement. Monitoring of teaching occurs, but does not focus enough on pupils' achievement. Records available lack sufficient information to show whether groups of pupils, for example those who join the school late, are progressing as well as others.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum is good. New thinking and planning for this year has led to greater flexibility and more integration between subjects. Though it has yet to be evaluated fully, this approach is leading to pupils' better understanding of these links. In particular, they are learning well about aspects of sustainability in various contexts.

Subjects retain recommended time allocations, using themes for study which are usually cross-curricular. In an English lesson, for example, the topic for discussion and writing was to argue for or against the UK joining the Euro-zone, making good links to improve pupils' understanding of economic matters.

The use of information and communication technology (ICT) is rightly a school priority for development as it is not yet creatively planned into all learning. Personal, social and health education (PSHE) lessons reinforce the religious ethos well and contribute very positively to pupils' understanding of emotional and more abstract aspects of life. Extra-curricular provision is satisfactory, with sessions often taken by trained parents.

### **Care, guidance and support**

#### **Grade: 1**

Care, support and guidance are outstanding. Staff place the safeguarding of pupils and ensuring their well-being at the heart of their considerations. Most parents greatly appreciate the very high quality of pastoral care, including the ways in which new entrants are swiftly integrated. 'Family groups' provide pupils with a strong sense of belonging and kinship between year groups, particularly for younger pupils and newcomers. Sensitive issues are dealt with very

effectively, involving outside agencies if necessary. This creates a safe, secure environment where pupils confidently approach adults in school for help if they need to.

Academic guidance is strong, so pupils know their targets, especially in English and mathematics, and are increasingly involved in setting them and judging their own progress. Higher challenge for abler pupils is well ensured, often through working with older year groups, while slower learners have opportunities to reinforce learning well amongst younger ones.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher provides very positive leadership, strongly promoting high expectations founded in the school's religious principles. She has overseen a significant trend in improving achievement since the last report, despite disruption caused during relocation and other very well managed challenges. All staff are now involved in school decision-making. Teachers and others are enjoying these new responsibilities for raising attainment jointly, whilst maintaining sensitive care, support and challenge. The governing body supports the school properly and training has been arranged to help several recent appointees in their roles.

Subject leaders welcome the challenge that curriculum changes present, sharing specialist knowledge effectively with other staff to improve teaching and learning. Leaders continually evaluate the school's and pupils' performance through data and other information. All are alert to potential complacency, taking sensible steps to avoid it, by working towards higher academic qualifications, for instance. Parents' views are sought, but a few express concerns relating to aspects of accommodation for Year 1 and about Year 6, where they feel some pupils' enjoyment wanes. Inspection found no other evidence of this, but the school is exploring it further.

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## Annex A

## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	<b>School Overall</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	2
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	2
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	1

<sup>1</sup> Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

## Annex A

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

## **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

16 May 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Helen's C of E Primary School, Abbotsham EX39 5AP

Thank you very much for making us welcome in your school on Wednesday, 2 May. We very much enjoyed being at St Helen's, talking to some of you and attending some of your lessons. I am writing to tell you what we found about your school.

These are some of the good things:

- Your school is good.
- You make good progress and learn well because the teaching is interesting.
- Adults in school take excellent care of you and are pleased that most of you enjoy school as much as you do.
- Your behaviour and attitudes are exceptionally good; we particularly like the way you welcome new pupils into your classes and make sure they settle into the school quickly.
- Most of you gain a lot of confidence and are good at taking responsibility in school and for other things.
- Adults run the school very well and have your interests in mind when they plan things.

Things we have asked the school to do to make things even better:

- We know you like using computers and enjoy it when teachers use the SMART boards; they already have plans to use these even more in lessons and we agree that they should.
- Teachers make sure you know your targets, especially in English and mathematics, and we have asked them to do more with the information they have about your progress to make sure that all of you are progressing as well as you can. There may be more times when other adults join your lessons like we did, to make sure of this.

Thank you again for your welcome. We hope you enjoy the rest of this term and have a good summer holiday.

Best Wishes

Janet Simms Lead inspector