



# St Helens Auckland Community Primary School

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 114104  
**Local Authority** Durham  
**Inspection number** 289808  
**Inspection dates** 26–27 September 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Lynne Read

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary	<b>School address</b>	Manor Road
<b>School category</b>	Community		St Helens Auckland, Bishop Auckland
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11		County Durham, DL14 9EN
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01388 604168
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	144	<b>Fax number</b>	01388 450041
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Gwenda Bainbridge
		<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Maeve MacKenzie
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	Not previously inspected		

<b>Age group</b>	<b>Inspection dates</b>	<b>Inspection number</b>
3–11	26–27 September 2006	289808

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

## Description of the school

This smaller than average primary school serves an area of Bishop Auckland that is part of a regeneration programme. The proportion of pupils claiming free school meals is much higher than average. On entry to the Nursery, children's development is well below that usually seen. There is a much higher proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities than in most schools. The majority of pupils come from White British backgrounds and the school caters for some Traveller children. Registered day care for children up to five years is provided on the premises by an external agent. The school experienced a period of difficulty before the appointment of the new headteacher one year ago.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

St Helens Auckland Primary judges itself as a satisfactory and improving school. The inspection findings agree. Under the good leadership of the new headteacher, the school is successfully implementing well-laid plans to raise standards. Pupils' achievement is now satisfactory, although in recent years it has been inadequate.

Children enter the school with levels of skill that are much lower than usually seen and have a satisfactory start to their education in the Foundation Stage (Nursery and Reception classes). Pupils in Years 2 to 6 have experienced disruptions to their learning in the past and, as a result, there are gaps in their knowledge, skills and understanding. Teaching focuses sharply on these gaps and standards are improving, but, because of the short time span and the amount of catch-up work needed, they remain below average for Year 6. There are some promising indicators for the younger pupils. The school's accurate tracking system, together with inspection findings, show that these pupils are working around the average level expected.

Pupils' personal development, including behaviour, is good and is a strength of the school. Pupils make a good contribution to the school community; for example, older pupils act as 'buddies' to younger ones. Such experience of responsibility prepares pupils well for life in the wider world.

Teaching is satisfactory overall and some is good. Interesting and often practical tasks ensure pupils are well motivated and enjoy their learning. In most lessons teachers have high expectations of pupils but these are not consistent enough to cater for all needs in the class, especially those more able pupils. The curriculum is satisfactory and pupils are enthusiastic about the good range of out-of-school clubs. A good emphasis on personal, social and health education enables pupils to make informed choices about their lifestyles and learn to deal with social and moral issues. Good attention is paid to safeguarding pupils and very profitable links with outside agencies contribute a great deal to pupils' learning and well-being. Parents express great confidence in the school.

Inspection findings match the school's own self-evaluation which is thorough and accurate. Action planning is clearly focused and has led to good improvements in teaching and learning. Good monitoring systems have boosted achievement in English and mathematics, but have not yet been used fully enough to have the same impact on science. Overall, improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory.

The school has been through a difficult period when standards and achievement declined. Working as a determined team, the headteacher and staff have driven through good improvements over the last year; the school has a refreshed feel and is moving forward. There is good morale among staff and a good capacity for the school to improve further.

## What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that all lessons cater for the needs of all groups of pupils, especially the more able.
- Develop systems for checking on provision, tracking progress and setting expectations for pupils in science.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 3

Achievement is satisfactory. Until this year, much was inadequate but new measures in place have led to good progress over the last year. The latest test results for the Year 6 pupils show improved standards, still below average but almost matching the targets set for the school. Too few pupils achieved the higher Level 5. The younger juniors and pupils in Year 2 have fewer shortfalls in their learning and are catching up successfully. Many are working at levels close to that seen in most schools.

Year 1 pupils have had better continuity in their learning as they worked through the Foundation Stage and this is beginning to improve their attainment. The situation is similar for children in the current Reception and Nursery classes, although because of the low level of their attainment when they start school, they do not reach their expected goals. Pupils with learning or emotional difficulties and the Traveller children progress as well as the majority because their needs are recognised and met. In the 2005 national tests boys outperformed girls, but this is not the usual pattern. In lessons, both are equally engaged and making equal progress.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 2

Personal development and well-being are good and are the strengths of the school. Pupils say they feel safe and secure. They behave well, are polite and keen to learn. Attendance is average, reflecting enjoyment of school and the good systems in place which reward positive attitudes and discourage absence.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. School rules are followed and promote good self-discipline. As one pupil said, 'Rules are helpful because they tell you what to do and don't go on about what you mustn't do.' Pupils are confident about discussing personal issues; this helps them to become mature. Their 'emotional barometers' help them to talk through, and make sense of, their experiences. Many opportunities for collaborative work and play help to develop good social skills.

Preparation for the world of work and an understanding of economic well-being are enhanced through opportunities for decision-making, such as through the school council. Pupils' views are valued and the council's recent participation in the appointment of a new teacher was an innovative and powerful way of demonstrating this.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory with several examples of good practice. In the Foundation Stage, children are organised into small teaching groups. Children benefit from the good balance of carefully planned, direct teaching together with opportunities for independent work where they practise what they have learned. Staff are aware that some aspects, such as integrating outdoor activities, require further development.

The headteacher has used the results of monitoring to improve teaching and learning. Generally, teachers now use pupils' targets for learning in order to pitch lessons and extra sessions at various levels of difficulty and to move pupils on at a fast pace. This is enabling pupils to overcome gaps in their previous learning and classrooms have a happy, positive atmosphere. In some lessons, however, the work is not challenging enough for the more able pupils. In some cases, teachers follow 'model' plans which are not always successful in meeting all their pupils' needs.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory. Planning has been improved to provide clear aims for lessons, especially in English and mathematics, and useful opportunities for pupils to practise their skills, such as writing and computer work. There is good support for pupils who need extra help and the special 'catch-up' programmes lead to accelerated learning. However, the provision for gifted and talented pupils is not fully developed.

Much of the curriculum contains a good practical element and opportunities for pupils to discuss things with their 'talking partner'. As one pupil said 'Lessons are a lot more fun now.' Pupils also say that they especially enjoy the good range of after-school clubs. Good attention is given to personal development, including sex and relationships education and drug awareness.

### Care, guidance and support

#### Grade: 2

Staff work hard to ensure pupils' safety and well-being and to eliminate factors that get in the way of learning. This work involves many links with outside agencies, home visits and the support of a learning mentor. Staff know pupils very well; they are proactive and tackle small behavioural issues before they turn into problems. Child protection procedures are effective and the school is complying with recent safeguarding requirements. A range of effective strategies help to make the school a happy place. For example, pupils like the calming sessions before or after lessons and are taught how to handle their own anger and other people's intimidating behaviour.

Pupils praised some drama work where they explored how they could 'prick the conscience of bullies'.

Pupils receive sound feedback in lessons and through good marking so they know how to make their work better. They have useful targets for learning in English and mathematics which are helping them to improve. This good system is not extended to science.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

Leadership and management are promoting good personal development and rising standards. The headteacher provides good leadership and has introduced a wave of change and improvement to management. Managers for English and mathematics have helped to develop good systems for checking on teaching, learning and attainment. The information from the school's newly developed assessment records and individual pupils' targets for learning in these subjects has increased teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve. As yet, there are no similar systems for monitoring or setting targets in science.

After a difficult period for the school, the new headteacher has developed a strong, unified team approach. Discussions with staff, parents and governors reveal that all are well aware of the need both for consolidation and the work yet to be embarked upon. This shared drive is summed up in the words of one governor who said 'We're never going back to the situation of the past'.

The governors are very supportive and have a sound overview of standards.

Well aware of some past shortcomings, they are keen to develop their role, especially in asking searching questions and gathering information for themselves. Governance is satisfactory and all statutory requirements are met.

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## 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>	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	3
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>	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

### Personal development and well-being

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

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	3
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	3
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	2

<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.

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
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	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
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**

St Helens Auckland Community Primary School

Manor Road

St Helens Auckland

Bishop Auckland

County Durham

DL14 9EN

28 September 2006

Dear Pupils

Thank you very much for the warm welcome and for all the help you gave me when I came to visit your school. I would like to tell you what I found out.

St Helens Auckland is a very friendly school. Your behaviour is good and you all get on well together and take good care of each other. Your teachers and families can be very proud of you. Mrs MacKenzie and the staff work very hard to make sure you are happy and safe. It is good to see the excellent relationships between you and the adults who teach you. I think the trust you have in your teachers encourages you to try hard and helps you to make good progress.

Please thank your parents for sending us lots of replies to the questionnaire. Most of them are very pleased with the school and they especially like the good care that your teachers provide. Some of them thought that your views were not listened to so it might be a good idea to tell them about the school council and your suggestion box.

You are making better progress now, especially in your English and mathematics work. Most of you have done well over the last year. However, I think some of you could go on to higher things and have asked your teachers to help you do this. I am sure you will enjoy the challenge. There have been lots of good changes in your school recently and you have good advice on how to improve your work in English and mathematics. Your teachers are going to look at ways of providing similar help in science.

Thank you once again for the interesting conversations we had and for letting me know your views so clearly. Good luck for the future, keep smiling and continue to enjoy your lovely school.

Yours sincerely

Mrs L Read

Lead inspector