

St Helen's Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111605
Local Authority	Hartlepool
Inspection number	310641
Inspection dates	8–9 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Joseph Clark

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	242
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr David Hammond
Headteacher	Mrs Lana Totty
Date of previous school inspection	1 November 2003
School address	Durham Street Hartlepool TS24 0HG
Telephone number	01429 267038
Fax number	01429 274377

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

St Helen's is an average size school serving an area of high social and economic deprivation. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is well above average. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is average. Few pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds. The school is part of a small Education Action Zone and it operates a Children's Satellite Centre in partnership with other schools and with the local authority.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school provides a satisfactory standard of education. Standards are below average overall but the pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Standards in English, particularly writing, are well below average and pupils in Years 1 to 6 do not achieve well enough in this subject; the boys do less well than the girls. The pupils make satisfactory progress overall but progress is better at Key Stage 2 than it is at Key Stage 1, especially in mathematics and science. Since the previous inspection, the school has made good improvement in the provision for information and communication technology (ICT). Standards have risen in mathematics and science but not in English.

Teaching overall is satisfactory. Typically, teachers explain clearly at the outset of lessons what pupils are expected to have learned by the end of the lesson and set tasks that challenge and extend all groups of learners to ensure that good learning takes place. In a minority of lessons, the tasks set do not take into account the specific needs of different groups of ability within the class. The teaching of English suffers from a lack of consistency, for example, in the quality of marking and the level of challenge and expectations of the pupils. The curriculum is satisfactory. Its enrichment is outstanding; a range of clubs, visits and visitors provides an excellent extension to work done in the classroom. However, the curriculum does not provide enough planned opportunities for pupils to develop their literacy skills, especially in writing.

Pupils' personal development is good. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They enjoy school, behave well and attend regularly. They are knowledgeable about healthy living and keeping safe. All say there is very little, if any, bullying. They make an outstanding contribution to the local community and are very generous in helping others less fortunate than themselves. Low standards in English at the end of Key Stage 2 are a barrier to pupils doing well when they move on to the next stage of their education.

The pastoral care of pupils is excellent. The headteacher and other adults have a detailed knowledge and understanding of each pupil's needs. They demonstrate a caring and compassionate approach which provides reassurance and motivation to please. Links with other agencies, particularly as a result of the school's extended service provision, are outstanding and ensure that support is provided when needed, not only to pupils, but to families as well.

The leadership and management of the school are satisfactory and the school provides satisfactory value for money. The headteacher and other leaders and managers know the school's strengths and areas for development. They have successfully improved pupils' personal development, their work in ICT, their attendance, and standards in mathematics and science. This is evidence that the school's capacity to improve is satisfactory. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school and are satisfied with the standard of education it provides.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children start school in the Foundation Stage with skills that are significantly below those typical for their age. They make good progress but by the end of the Foundation Stage, they reach levels in their development below those expected nationally in mathematical, personal and social, and physical development. Standards in writing, however, are significantly below those which children of this age are expected to have reached. A broad curriculum provides children with good opportunities to progress and prepares them well for the next stage of their

education. Leadership in the Foundation Stage has accurately identified writing, and knowledge and understanding of the world, as key areas for development. The pastoral care of children is outstanding and relationships are excellent. Learners with specific learning and health needs are well supported and excellent use is made of partnerships with the Children's Centre. Facilities for outdoor play are excellent. Children enjoy their time in the Foundation Stage and engage in activities with enthusiasm.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise expectations in the teaching of English and increase the level of challenge for the pupils, especially the boys.
- Improve the rate of pupils' progress at Key Stage 1.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Standards at the end of Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 are below average. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Pupils' progress in Key Stage 1 is satisfactory. The pace of progress increases in Key Stage 2 and the school's results of national tests at the end of Year 6 in 2007 show progress to be good in mathematics and science but inadequate in English, especially for boys. The school did not meet its challenging targets. Currently, standards in English are well below average and some pupils do not achieve as well as they should in this subject. Standards of writing are significantly lower than those in reading. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those entitled to free school meals make the same progress as other groups of pupils.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They enjoy coming to school where their behaviour and attitudes to learning are good. Children are friendly, easy to talk to and courteous to visitors. Exclusions are rare and alternatives sought wherever possible. Pupils attend regularly and they make an outstanding contribution to the school and local community, for example, through the work of the school choir and their enthusiastic involvement in local initiatives, such as bulb planting. They are very generous in supporting others less fortunate than themselves through raising money for charities. Pupils understand the importance of a healthy lifestyle through sensible diet and the value of keeping fit through regular exercise. Pupils take a great pride in their school. They are eager to take on responsibility and develop leadership skills, for example, as 'buddies' or through opportunities to become junior sports leaders. There is some good provision in encouraging enterprise skills, for example, through participation in the Challenging Children in Industry initiative. Pupils' low English skills do not prepare them well for the next stage in their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Typically in lessons, the pupils are given clear explanations about what they are expected to learn; work is set that challenges and stretches each ability group and there is good recapitulation of what has been learned at the end of the lesson. In a minority of lessons, pupils have to spend too much time listening and, occasionally, the tasks set do not match the needs of all the pupils. The marking of pupils' work is often good with clear advice to pupils on how to improve. Planning does not ensure all pupils, but particularly boys, get sufficient opportunities to improve their writing skills, not only in English lessons but also in other subjects. In all lessons, relationships with children are supportive and encouraging and motivate children to want to learn. Good support is provided by classroom assistants.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum meets all statutory requirements but the arrangements in the English curriculum for improving pupils' literacy skills provide too few planned opportunities to raise standards, especially in writing. There are good curricular links with partner institutions, for example, in French and art. Arrangements for transition between the stages of education are good. The personal, social, health and citizenship curriculum provides excellent support for pupils' personal development. There are an outstanding range of enrichment activities provided, including after-school clubs, particularly in sport, visits to places of interest and visitors such as local theatre groups. There is good use of ICT to support pupils' learning in other subjects.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The pastoral care and support of pupils are outstanding. Parents appreciate the care the school takes of their children. One parent wrote: 'I have an exceptionally high opinion of St Helen's school and its teachers and staff. I am so proud that my daughter is in such good hands'. Teachers and other adults are committed to encouraging pupils' enjoyment of school and their motivation to learn. Outstanding links with other agencies ensure pupils receive appropriate support when needed. Risk assessments and safeguarding procedures are robust and meet the requirements of recent legislation. The work of the social inclusion team and partnerships to support pupils with specific additional needs is outstanding. Strategies for improving attendance have been very effective. The academic guidance pupils receive is satisfactory. Systems to track pupils' progress are good but the use of targets for learning is inconsistent and pupils are not always aware of what their next steps of learning need to be.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leaders and managers have an accurate view of the school's main strengths and areas for development. The headteacher has given a clear direction and focus to the school's work. The senior leadership team provides good support and an ethos has been established in which each

child is valued and their achievements celebrated. Pupils who have not enjoyed success in other schools are often given a second chance at St Helen's. Excellent partnerships have been developed with other agencies to provide services beyond the school day. The impact of this has been in the strengthening of parent/school links and an appreciation by pupils that they are valued and cared for. Consequently, parents have greater faith in the school, ensuring, for example, that their children now attend regularly whereas, until fairly recently, attendance was significantly below average. School targets in national tests at the end of Key Stage 2 are appropriately challenging but are rarely met and actions taken to raise standards in English have not had sufficient impact. Governance is satisfactory.

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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	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ 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

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
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	3

The quality of provision

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

¹ 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

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
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

12 November 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of St Helen's Primary School, Hartlepool, TS24 0HG

Thank you so much for your warm welcome when we visited your school recently. We really appreciated the help you gave us and the interesting things you told us about your school. We enjoyed your Celebration assembly and were impressed by how much you enjoy singing.

These are the main findings of our inspection:

- you are making good progress in mathematics and science, especially in Years 3 to 6
- you are not making enough progress in writing, the boys especially
- you enjoy school and work hard; your behaviour is good
- the adults take excellent care of you
- the school has developed outstanding links with other organisations to help you in your personal lives
- your attendance is improving all the time – keep it up!
- you make an outstanding contribution to the local community in lots of different ways
- the range of activities outside of normal lessons, such as clubs and trips, and visitors to the school is brilliant.

We think you could reach higher standards in writing by the time you leave Year 6 and we also think you could make better progress when you are in Key Stage 1. You have an important part to play so keep working hard, especially in literacy lessons, and do your best.

Thank you once again for all your help. Good luck in the future!

Yours sincerely

Joe Clark and Lynsey Hunter

The Inspection Team