

# St Helen Auckland Community Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	114104
<b>Local Authority</b>	Durham
<b>Inspection number</b>	338297
<b>Inspection dates</b>	23–24 November 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Georgiana Sale

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>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	161
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs G Bainbridge
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Maeve MacKenzie
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>School address</b>	Manor Road St Helen Auckland Bishop Auckland DL14 9EN
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 15 lessons, held meetings with governors, staff and groups of pupils, and talked with a few parents. They observed the school's work and looked at documentation including records of the pupils' progress, the school improvement plan, assessment information, policies and samples of pupils' work. Information about safeguarding was also evaluated. Inspectors also took into account the views of staff and pupils expressed in questionnaires. They received and analysed 44 parental questionnaires.

- how effectively the school monitors the performance of all pupils so that they make progress in line with their starting points and capabilities
- the standard of leadership across the school and how well it is driving improvement
- standards of attainment and the rates of pupils' progress throughout the school.

## Information about the school

St Helen Auckland is a smaller-than-average primary school serving 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. There is also a much higher proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities than in most schools. The majority of pupils come from White British backgrounds and the school caters for some Traveller children.

**Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate**

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

## Inspection judgements

**Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?**

**2**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**2**

## Main findings

St Helen Auckland is a good school. A few aspects of the school's work are outstanding and these contribute significantly to pupils receiving a good education and achieving well. Pupils show high levels of care and concern for each other and support each other sensitively in class and around the school. This is largely because of a strong ethos of respect for individuals and the excellent level of care and support they are given from all the adults in the school. The pupils' personal development is good overall; pupils are polite, confident, very well behaved and say that they feel very safe. They understand very well what to do to stay healthy and how to keep themselves safe, and they use safely information and communication technology (ICT), including mobile telephones. Parents and carers are very positive about the school and make approving comments such as, 'Thanks to the staff here, any child will be happy and succeed.'

Pupils join the Nursery with skills that are low compared to those typical of children of that age. Pupils of all ages want to learn; teaching and learning are good. As a result, in all classes, pupils make good progress, especially in English. Standards are broadly average overall by the end of Year 6 although attainment and progress in mathematics lag behind that in English and science.

Lessons are fun, interesting and packed with activities which encourage pupils to work in pairs or teams and to enjoy learning. The curriculum is good and has strong links between the subjects; this has been effective in supporting the development and use of key skills, especially in English. The school recognises that the use of key words to help pupils understand other subjects is not well developed and is putting strategies in place to address this, especially for mathematics and science.

Teachers use assessment information well to plan lessons that meet pupils' various capabilities, as well as to identify any pupils in danger of falling behind. This enables staff to put help in place. Staff then re-check progress to make sure the help has worked in helping pupils to catch up. Teachers have begun to tell pupils how to improve their work and what they need to learn next. The best practice is in English; it is not consistently as effective in mathematics and science.

The school works well with parents and carers and makes good use of external agencies to make sure that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported well in and out of class. Consequently, these pupils make good progress. The school carefully tracks the progress of all groups of children to make sure none underachieve.

The headteacher, well supported by the governing body, has a compelling vision for the school. There is a shared determination to ensure that all pupils achieve well. The headteacher and governors have built a team to share and deliver this vision but

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recognise that other leaders in the school need to play a greater role in analysing data and to coordinate action to make sure that all pupils' needs are catered for.

The school has good capacity to improve further, as demonstrated by its accurate self-evaluation, the good and improving teaching and learning, and because improvement in pupils' achievement and attainment across the whole school is evident.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment, particularly in mathematics by:
  - providing more sharply focused individual targets for pupils
  - giving pupils more detailed individual feedback on what step to take next to improve
  - making sure pupils understand, can spell and use keywords specific to individual subject areas
  - ensure that parents and carers know about and understand more clearly the progress their children are making.
- Extend accountability and share leadership more widely across the whole staff by:
  - involving subject leaders and other middle managers more in monitoring and supporting lessons and coordinating intervention.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

**2**

Although children are still working towards the nationally expected learning goals by the end of their Reception year, standards are just below average by the end of Year 2. This represents good progress which continues throughout school. By the time they leave, pupils have reached broadly average standards in English although their attainment and progress is not as strong in mathematics. A dip in the school's results in 2009 ran counter to the rise in attainment in 2007 and 2008. Although attainment fluctuates from year to year, given their starting points, pupils made good and some made very good progress in 2009.

Pupils are keenly involved in their learning and apply themselves well in lessons. They have very good self-discipline and there are warm and supportive relationships between the pupils and with staff. Pupils enjoy the more practical active lessons which engage them well and they work well as individuals, in pairs and in groups. The pupils know how to listen to each other and know how to work well in teams. These skills and their good personal development prepare them well to make the most of opportunities in their future life.

Pupils' consistently thoughtful and extremely good behaviour, care and respect for each other create a calm and welcoming place to learn. Pupils are very open to new experiences and ideas, and take an active part in decision making in the school. For example, they have decided how money is going to be spent to make their playground more fun. They maturely and responsibly take on their roles as 'buddies' and as

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monitors to help the school run smoothly, and contribute to their local community by helping to plant bulbs and by performing concerts at Christmas in the locality. Attendance is broadly average. The school works very hard with key families to improve attendance and punctuality.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	3
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>2</b>

### How effective is the provision?

Teaching methods are chosen well to motivate pupils and teachers have clear routines and high expectations to ensure that learning proceeds at a brisk pace. Pupils have very good self-discipline and there are warm and supportive relationships between the pupils and with staff. Accurate assessment supports planning to match lessons to the needs of the pupils, and in-class support is used well to make sure that all pupils make good progress. Pupils have broad targets in English and mathematics which are helping them to make good progress. However, the way pupils' individual targets are set and feedback is given is not specific enough to make sure that all pupils know exactly how well they are doing or what to do to improve.

The main factor that ensures that vulnerable children, or those with special educational

<sup>1</sup> The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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needs and/or disabilities, make good progress is the excellent care and support all pupils receive and the security and confidence this gives them. Support staff are used very well. For example, a learning mentor makes sure that immediate support is given to any pupil who feels not ready to learn at the start of the day, and another support worker works with parents and carers to give help with issues such as attendance. Individual needs, including social and health-related needs, are meticulously explored and staff consistently think creatively and use partner agencies to give outstanding support to pupils and their families.

Good overall, the curriculum provides some memorable learning experiences. These include special events and the much enjoyed day when pupils 'boarded an aeroplane' (chairs in the main hall) and set off for France. Staff and pupils participated in a variety of activities and enjoyed a taste of French food.

The curriculum has been carefully planned to meet the needs of the pupils and good provision is made for the development of basic skills in literacy, in learning how to learn and in personal skills. Staff use the interactive whiteboards well to enliven lessons and pupils have access to computers although their use in different subjects is not consistently planned for. Pupils take advantage of the wide variety of out-of-school clubs and activities and their horizons are broadened by many trips and visits.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>1</b>

**How effective are leadership and management?**

The headteacher's ambitious vision is understood by the staff and governors and they all share her drive for improvement. The school's effective promotion of equality is seen in the high quality of its care and the actions it is taking to make sure some groups of pupils do not underperform. Governors are well informed, knowledgeable and play a very active role in school life.

The very clear, effective improvement plans are based on a comprehensive analysis of performance data and rigorous monitoring of teaching and learning. This enables the headteacher to know and act on the school's strengths and weaknesses. This has resulted in rapid improvements in teaching and learning and improved performance now seen particularly in English where pupils now make good progress and are set to exceed the challenging targets set for them.

There is a strong emphasis on child protection and all staff have received relevant training. At the time of the inspection, safeguarding procedures were robust and met all

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statutory requirements. The school forms strong partnerships which are used effectively to enhance the pupils' learning opportunities. For example, a local media group helped to make a short film, 'Going to Appleby Fair', which was written and performed by the pupils recounting the lives of the Travelling community in the past.

The headteacher has been successful in developing a cohesive school community based on a love of learning and clear values of respect for individuals and everyone playing their part. The school has a good understanding of the community it serves. It has successfully reinforced attitudes and skills in its pupils that will enable them to play an active role in any future community of which they are member. As a result, pupils enjoy experiencing new cultures and different ways of life.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>2</b>

**Early Years Foundation Stage**

Children get off to a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The very low levels with which most children start school in the Nursery are raised significantly by the end of Reception. Despite good achievement and progress, attainment is below average by the start of Year 1. At all times, children are safe and secure; all procedures regarding safeguarding are securely in place.

A lively and stimulating environment has been created for children. Both indoors and outdoors, play and learning go hand in hand with a host of activities that give children every opportunity to explore and to make good progress in all areas of learning. While many have emotional difficulties, they learn to play alongside others and increasingly to share and cooperate. Calmness pervades the class areas; children get on well and fall



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outs are rare. Smiles are the norm and children buzz with the excitement of trying new things. They develop their independence and become confident to make their own choices. Imagination among the children knows no bounds. One child was fascinated by using a torch and magnifying glass to seek out animal homes and a group were totally engrossed in, 'filling the lorry with stuff for the cherry pie factory'!

Staff strike a good balance between enabling children to learn through play and extending learning through adult-led tasks, for example in linking sounds and letters, and in reading, writing and mathematical development. Staff know each child very well and sensitively intervene where necessary to support, cajole or encourage. Those with special educational needs and/or learning difficulties are identified as soon as possible so that their needs can be met.

Effective leadership and management have secured good improvement in provision since the last inspection. Many successful and innovative strategies have been introduced to encourage the involvement of parents and carers in their children's education, particularly in encouraging the involvement of more 'dads' and male carers. The accommodation has been completely revamped and resources are much better. While planning and assessment are good overall, some aspects of record keeping are not closely enough aligned to the criteria set for children of this age.

*These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

**Views of parents and carers**

Virtually all the completed questionnaires were positive. Parents and carers commented on the helpful and approachable staff and all felt that their children really enjoyed school and that they were happy with what the school did for their children. Inspectors agree with parents and carers who strongly feel that the school keeps children safe and helps them make good progress. A few parents and carers said that they would like more frequent information about the progress of their children as individuals and inspectors agree that this would be of benefit.

### Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Helen Auckland Community Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 44 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 161 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	33	75	11	25	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	27	61	15	34	2	5	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	20	45	22	50	2	5	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	18	41	24	55	2	5	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	15	34	29	66	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	14	32	26	59	3	7	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	23	52	20	45	1	2	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	14	32	22	50	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	15	34	27	61	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	17	39	23	52	2	5	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	16	36	24	55	1	2	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	21	48	21	48	1	2	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	27	61	17	39	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

## Glossary

### What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

### Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

**This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.**



Dear Pupils

We really enjoyed visiting your school and I am writing to thank you for two very interesting days. Your thoughts and views helped us to make our judgements about the school. We thought this about your school.

- Children in Reception thoroughly enjoy school and learn quickly.
- Your behaviour was excellent and you are kind to each other and play together very happily.
- You are well taught and your lessons are fun and interesting.
- You are really well cared for and supported by all the adults in the school.
- You make good progress and work hard in lessons.
- The school works closely with your parents and carers to make sure you are successful at school.

We have asked your school to look at how they can make things even better. The most important things are:

- your teachers need to tell you exactly what to do to improve your work, especially in mathematics
- your teachers need to give you individual targets in English and mathematics
- subject leaders need to look more carefully at the progress you are making.

You can help by attending school every day, working hard and always trying your best.

I wish you every success in your time at school

Yours sincerely

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