

# St Helen's Primary School

Durham Street, Hartlepool TS24 0HG

## Inspection dates

9–10 November 2016

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement

- Governors have not challenged leaders sufficiently to secure good outcomes for all groups of pupils. Governors' skills in driving improvement are underdeveloped.
- Governors and leaders have not ensured that disadvantaged pupils make rapid progress. Pupils do not catch up quickly with others nationally whose starting points are similar.
- Leaders' contributions to school improvement differ in terms of quality and effectiveness. Pupils' achievements in mathematics and reading are not, therefore, consistently good.
- Teachers' planning and questioning skills are variable. Not all teachers match learning precisely to pupils' needs or encourage pupils to think deeply about their learning.
- Teachers do not challenge the most able pupils with sufficient consistency. The most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged, do not reach the greater depths of learning that should be expected of them, particularly within reading and mathematics.
- Pupils do not read with consistent frequency to adults in school. Pupils' progress varies.
- Pupils' attitudes and behaviours diminish in lessons where teaching does not capture their interest or meet their needs.
- Teaching and learning in the early years varies. Children in Reception are not supported or challenged effectively to acquire basic skills in reading and mathematics rapidly. Some teachers' expectations are too low.

### The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher is new. Her astute evaluation of the school's performance has resulted in accurate improvement planning. All staff now share a clear vision for moving forward.
- The headteacher has restructured the leadership team, widening capacity. Subject leaders are quickly developing the skills and understanding needed to make more effective contributions to school improvement.
- Staff and pupils have strong, mutually respectful relationships. Pupils feel safe and their welfare needs are met effectively. Parents agree that their children are well looked after.
- Pupils are polite, friendly and happy. Pupils feel that behaviour has improved considerably because of actions taken by the headteacher.
- Leaders have worked well with parents to improve pupils' attendance and punctuality.

## Full report

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

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in mathematics and reading, by:
  - sharpening teachers' questioning skills to enable pupils to extend their knowledge and think more deeply about their learning
  - developing teachers' abilities to plan effectively to meet the needs of all groups of pupils
  - creating consistency in terms of the frequency and quality of reading opportunities
  - ensuring that the most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged, are successfully challenged to reach the standards of which they are capable
  - raising adults' expectations of what Reception children can do and achieve.
- Equip new leaders with the enhanced skills, knowledge and understanding required to drive improvement in their area of responsibility, by:
  - allowing leaders at all levels regular opportunities to demonstrate good practice, monitor pupils' achievements and hold teachers fully accountable for the progress of all groups of pupils.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Requires improvement

- Leaders and governors have not brought about rapid improvement since the previous inspection. Several leaders are new to post and it is too early to measure the impact of their actions on pupils' achievements.
- Leaders and governors have not ensured that the pupil premium funding has been used effectively to diminish differences in achievement for disadvantaged pupils. Disadvantaged pupils, particularly the most able disadvantaged pupils, make variable progress across key stages and subjects, too often underperforming compared to others nationally from similar starting points.
- The recently appointed headteacher has ensured that robust school improvement plans focus on the correct priorities. Plans are detailed and measurable, meaning lines of accountability and time frames are clear. There are early signs that targets and actions are bearing fruit; attendance, for example, is already rising steadily. It is too soon to define the extent to which improved outcomes for all pupils will be secured.
- The headteacher monitors teaching, learning and assessment regularly and effectively. Pupils' work is examined and teachers are given clear guidance about their strengths and areas for development. Not all leaders monitor their subject with this focus and precision. Consequently, pupils have not made consistently good progress from their different starting points, particularly in mathematics and reading.
- The headteacher has amended the curriculum to meet the needs of pupils better. Academic achievement is central to several adjustments and so, too, is the raising of pupils' aspirations and adults' expectations. Democratically involving staff and pupils with the changes has led to a sense of togetherness and belonging. Pupils have first-hand experience of why and how decisions are made – active links with life in a democratic society.
- The headteacher has ensured that social, moral, spiritual and cultural values also underpin the curriculum. A range of 'drop boxes' placed discreetly throughout the school, for example, gather the views and ideas of pupils. Regular opportunities are created to talk about things that concern, interest or inspire pupils because the opinions of all are respected. Within this arena of debate and discussion, pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- The headteacher has quickly established a positive ethos that holds aspiration for all pupils at its core. Her clearly communicated vision for the future of the school has been adopted by adults and pupils alike. Energy and excitement are tangible and morale is high as all feel valued and involved. One comment captured the views expressed by many, 'The headteacher is driving a train that we've all agreed to board.'
- The local authority has recently responded more purposefully to weaknesses in the school's performance. School leaders and governors are now benefiting from increased challenge and support. Subject specialist advice has been forthcoming and further involvement is planned.
- Leaders use the physical education and sport funding effectively. Teachers and pupils

benefit from working with specialist sports staff and apprentices. Skills are heightened and the range of sporting ventures and activities is extended. Pupils express positive views about sport and fitness and particularly enjoy the after-school football club.

- Leaders use the extra government money received to support pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, judiciously. As a result, the majority of pupils make progress in line with others nationally who have similar starting points.

## **Governance of the school**

- Governors' understanding of their duties and responsibilities in driving school improvement is not sharp enough. Although committed to the school and proud of their association with it, governors do not challenge or support leaders and managers with sufficient rigour.
- Governors meet regularly to discuss the work of the school. At present, one core member of the governing body deciphers the school's information, gauging the achievement of St Helen's pupils in relation to other pupils nationally. Other governors have been too reliant on the information presented by this sole governor and school leaders. Collectively, governors are not well enough informed about the impact of pupil premium funding on disadvantaged pupils in all year groups.
- Governors are aware of the relationship between teachers' pay and performance. Procedures and policies have been refined recently to enable leaders to take clear and decisive action to address issues of underperformance.
- Governors are dedicated to strengthening their partnership with parents. By increasing their presence on the school premises, at school events, assemblies and parents evenings, recently, governors are offering parents greater opportunities to be central to the process of school improvement.

## **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders ensure that the school's single central record of recruitment checks is robust and well-maintained. Several leaders have recently updated their training to ensure that recruitment processes take note of the most recent safeguarding guidance. Leaders' actions are clearly focused on the protection of pupils.
- School leaders make sure that the needs of vulnerable pupils and families are met effectively. Staff go that extra mile to work closely with families and acquire external support and expertise where needs arise. To this end, leaders have built strong and effective partnerships with agencies such as health, social services, police, educational psychologists, play and speech therapists. Signposting families to a range of services across the local community is a strength of the school's work because of these strong links.
- The social inclusion officer works closely with families, offering a vital daily link between home and school. Particularly successful initiatives have included the work to improve attendance, secure essential foodbanks for families and to offer bereavement counselling.

- The headteacher has created a culture of safety and vigilance. Staff are aware of their responsibilities regarding the protection and welfare of pupils, adhering to the principles of the most recent guidance about keeping children safe in education. Pupils say they feel safe and parents agree that the school looks after their children well.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

## Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment varies across key stages. Some teachers use assessment to plan tasks for pupils effectively. Others, however, do not. In some lessons, pupils' learning behaviours deteriorate when tasks fail to meet their needs or capture their interest. This lack of dependably good or better teaching means that improvement is needed.
- Teachers do not consistently stretch and challenge the most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged, to master skills and concepts or to think deeply about their learning. Pupils too often practise things they already know and can do. As a result, progress is weak compared to pupils nationally from similar starting points, particularly in reading and mathematics.
- Teachers read with pupils and monitor the frequency and quality of pupils' reading in an inconsistent manner across school. This means that some pupils have too few opportunities to practise reading with adults or too little guidance about what they need to do to improve their skills.
- Most lower-ability readers who read with inspectors tackled books that matched their ability well. However, some of the most able pupils chose books that were too easy, requiring little thought or effort. Pupils' progress in reading is too variable.
- Some teachers use questions expertly to extend pupils' thinking and strengthen pupils' understanding. These teachers quickly get to the heart of pupils' current knowledge or existing skills and are therefore able to move pupils rapidly on in their learning. This effective practice, however, does not yet feature consistently across all classes.
- The teaching of phonics is improving steadily over time. Teaching staff articulate sounds clearly and support pupils to do likewise. Most staff use their good subject knowledge in this area to ensure that pupils use subject-specific vocabulary correctly. This prepares pupils well for the next stage in their learning about the English language and the grammar that underpins it.
- Teachers are following the revised feedback and marking policy carefully. This has resulted in more consistent practices across key stages. Working alongside inspectors, however, subject leaders noted that teachers' expectations of the quality and quantity of work produced by pupils differed across subjects.
- Teaching assistants are well utilised by teachers to support pupils with social, emotional or behavioural needs. Teaching assistants' positive attitudes, effective behaviour management techniques and patience allow these vulnerable pupils to get the most out of lessons. These pupils are supported and challenged effectively.
- Teachers are tackling weaknesses in the teaching and learning of mathematics proactively. Staff training has developed teachers' subject knowledge successfully. Bespoke strategies such as the daily arithmetic sessions are helping pupils to develop numerical confidence and recall mathematical facts rapidly. Consequently, for some

pupils work in books is beginning to show improvement in terms of accuracy and application.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils feel safe. Pupils understand and value the efforts made by adults to foster this feeling of security. Several pupils, for example, said that increased adult presence on the school yard at breaktimes, recently, has helped them feel well looked after. Parents who spoke with inspectors described the school's work as 'brilliant', agreeing that their children are safe and cared for effectively.
- Pupils in each key stage can talk knowledgeably about staying safe when working online. Regular e-safety discussions and workshops equip pupils with the skills needed to identify potential risks and benefits of working with technology. Pupils know the procedures for reporting any concerns they may have.
- Staff are vigilant and consistently mindful of their duty to protect pupils and keep them safe. Records show that any concerns are reported in a timely manner and leaders are diligent in their efforts to secure essential welfare requirements for vulnerable pupils and families, where needed.
- Pupils are proud of their roles in school. Members of the pupils' council talk confidently about the work that they do, understanding that they represent the views of others, not just themselves. Groups of pupils help in the lunch hall or playground, supporting and looking after their peers. Pupils learn to respect and consider the views of others, while taking pride in their environment and accomplishments through their actions.
- Pupils understand the different forms that bullying can take and talk confidently about what to do if concerns arise. Pupils told inspectors that bullying is rare. They are confident that adults will not tolerate bullying in any form.

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Pupils told inspectors that teaching and learning is at times interrupted because of the behaviour of some pupils. Inspectors found that in lessons where the needs or interests of pupils were not met effectively by teachers, pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning deteriorated.
- Pupils' overall attendance has improved and now sits broadly in line with national figures. Instances of pupils being regularly absent from school have reduced. Leaders have recently taken action to improve punctuality further. Consequently, most pupils arrive at school ready and in time for lessons to begin. Pupils' attendance remains a focus for leaders, however, because they aim to reduce the differences between classes.
- Some pupils expressed concerns about missing property and belongings. Pupils felt

that while adults try to ensure that missing items are returned to rightful owners, this did not consistently transpire.

- Pupils are curious and courteous. They enjoy school and articulate positive views about school and staff. One pupil's comment captured the views that many pupils expressed about their new headteacher, 'Everyone wants to make her happy... we want to show her how good we are.'
- Pupils conduct themselves in a sensible manner in and around school. Adults monitor movement and transitions well so that a sense of calm and order prevails.
- Playtimes are happy, lively affairs. Adults have ensured that there are a multitude of resources and designated areas for play. This results in pupils having plenty of fun things to do outside, making playtimes enjoyable.

### Outcomes for pupils

### Requires improvement

- Key stage 1 has seen a declining trend of attainment compared to national averages. In 2016, outcomes improved for key stage 1 girls, bringing them broadly in line with others nationally. Outcomes for boys, however, remained weak in mathematics and reading particularly. No boys achieved greater depth in reading and the proportion of boys reaching the expected standard in mathematics was well below national averages.
- In key stage 2, outcomes have been variable over time. A sharp drop in attainment in 2015 resulted in pupils' outcomes being significantly below others nationally within reading and mathematics specifically. Although the combined score in reading, writing and mathematics in 2016 was broadly in line with national figures, girls' reading and mathematics for both boys and girls remained areas of weakness in 2016.
- Differences between disadvantaged pupils and others have fluctuated from year to year. In 2015, in key stage 2, for example, the proportion of disadvantaged pupils making expected or better than expected progress in writing was in line with others nationally. However, in 2016 in key stage 2, progress for the most able disadvantaged pupils in mathematics and reading compared to others from similar starting points was particularly weak. These variable outcomes mean that a review of leaders' use of the pupil premium funding is required.
- The most able pupils have made variable progress over time due to inconsistencies in teaching. In 2016, the proportion of girls in key stage 1 reaching a greater depth in writing was well above the national average. In key stage 2 the proportion of pupils reaching a greater depth in writing also exceeded national averages. The proportion of pupils reaching a greater depth in reading in either key stage, however, was well below others nationally. Outcomes for the most able continue to vary and require improvement.
- The proportion of pupils who achieved the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics check is steadily rising. Improvements in teachers' subject knowledge, work in pupils' books and the school's own information indicate that improvements are being sustained.
- Most pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are now making good progress from their starting points. Leaders have tackled the previously held low expectations for this group, rigorously, and work in books shows that improved rates of

progress are being successfully secured.

- Rates of progress for current pupils across all key stages are improving. This is due to leaders' actions. Programmes of work in reading and mathematics that had little impact or no effect in terms of improving pupils' outcomes have been removed or replaced.
- The libraries have been re-vamped to inspire a love of reading and new initiatives in mathematics have been introduced, improving consistency across key stages. This improving picture is confirmed in pupils' books and captured in the school's own information.

### Early years provision

### Requires improvement

- The proportion of children reaching a good level of development by the time they leave the early years has improved recently to match national averages. Nevertheless, differences in outcomes persist across groups. Disadvantaged children do not make rapid enough progress in the early years to allow them to catch up with others from similar starting points.
- The quality of teaching and learning in the early years is inconsistent. Children settle well into Nursery and make strong progress from below-typical starting points. As children move into Reception, however, progress stalls because the expectations of some adults are too low. Children do not make the progress that should be expected of them in the basic skills of reading and mathematics.
- Children behave well throughout the provision. Children listen carefully to adults and show an enormous thirst for learning and enquiry. The extent to which this is capitalised upon by adults varies. The most able children are not given consistent opportunities to expand their knowledge or develop their skills and understanding.
- Staff meet the welfare needs of children capably. All staff are considerate of children and their families, responding promptly to concerns or questions raised. Care and patience are bywords of their work meaning that interactions between adults and children are positive and respectful.
- Staff are trained well and have a strong understanding of the overarching principles of child protection. Records and discussions with staff indicate that safeguarding procedures are adhered to consistently. Staff have 'it-could-happen-here' attitudes to the protection of children, keeping children safe from harm effectively.
- Early years staff have created a rich environment for pupils. A wide range of good quality materials and resources provide children with an attractive environment in which to learn.

## School details

Unique reference number	111605
Local authority	Hartlepool
Inspection number	10019372

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	326
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Hammond
Headteacher	Carole Bradley
Telephone number	01429 267038
Website	<a href="http://www.sthelensprimaryschool.co.uk">www.sthelensprimaryschool.co.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:admin.sthelens@school.hartlepool.gov.uk">admin.sthelens@school.hartlepool.gov.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	27–28 February 2013

## Information about this school

- The school does not meet requirements on the publication of information about the impact of pupil premium funding on its website.
- A new headteacher has recently been appointed and significant restructuring and staffing changes have taken place.
- The school is bigger than average and the overwhelming majority of pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is well above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is high compared to nationally. The proportion of pupils who have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan, is below average.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning, including behaviour, across classes in all key stages. All observations across the first day of the inspection were conducted jointly by the lead inspector and either the headteacher or the deputy headteacher.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior and subject leaders, as well as governors, including the chair of the governing body and a representative of the local authority. Telephone conversations were held by the lead inspector with the assistant director for education and the headteacher of Rift House Primary School.
- Inspectors read with pupils of differing abilities and talked with pupils formally and informally to gather their views and opinions. All 53 responses to the pupil questionnaire were also considered.
- A wide range of the school's own information and documentation was studied, including records documenting the checks made by leaders on teaching and learning, the school's improvement plans and self-evaluation statements. Information about the performance management of staff, the work of the governing body and documentation relating to safeguarding and attendance was also examined.
- Parents' views were taken into account via the free text responses communicated to the lead inspector. There were too few responses expressed by parents in Ofsted's Parent View questionnaire to contribute to the inspection; however, the views of parents were gathered first-hand during the course of the inspection.
- The views expressed by staff were considered during meetings, informal discussion and from the 30 responses received in the staff questionnaire.

## Inspection team

Fiona Manuel, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Ann Muxworthy	Ofsted Inspector
Geoffrey Seagrove	Ofsted Inspector
Deborah Ashcroft	Ofsted Inspector

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