

St Helen's Primary Academy

St Helen's Way, Monk Bretton, Barnsley, South Yorkshire, S71 2PS

Inspection dates 10–11 December 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- The progress across year groups is too variable and some groups of pupils, including the least and most-able, as well as those with special education needs, do not make good progress.
- The quality of teaching is inconsistent. Actions taken by leaders to move teaching to good have not had the impact they expected, mainly because of staff absence.
- Teaching requires improvement because not all teachers use what they know about their pupils to plan lessons that will meet the needs of learners. Questioning is not always used effectively to probe and deepen pupils' thinking and understanding. Some teachers do not mark in a way that helps pupils to know how to improve or learn from their mistakes.
- Senior leaders do not use information about pupils' progress precisely enough to inform self-evaluation or set precise performance targets for teachers to ensure the gaps in achievement for some groups of pupils, such as the least able, close rapidly.
- The guided reading strategy is not making best use of the daily lesson to ensure all pupils are able to develop reading skills effectively and make good progress. There are limited opportunities for pupils to apply writing skills across the curriculum.
- Vacancies on the governing body mean that most governors have day-to-day connections with the school either as parents or staff. Not all governors are involved in challenging leaders robustly enough. The academy's website is non-compliant.

The school has the following strengths

- The school's inclusion leader is pivotal in ensuring pupils feel happy and safe and are ready to learn. Training ensures all staff understand the importance of this and contribute effectively to safeguarding procedures.
- Positive relationships and good behaviour management ensure pupils behave well and have good attitudes to learning.
- Attendance is improving year on year because of the effective work undertaken by the school's administration officer.
- Parents are overwhelmingly positive about this school.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 16 lessons and saw teaching and learning in every class in the school. They also observed the work of teaching assistants.
- Discussions were held with groups of pupils, senior and middle leaders, support staff, the Chair of the Governing Body and the regional director of the Academy.
- Inspectors listened to the reading of some pupils in Years 1, 2 and 3.
- Inspectors looked at the school's self-evaluation documentation, action plans, safeguarding information, policies, minutes of governing body meetings and performance management information.
- Twenty-five parents responded to the online questionnaire, Parent View and inspectors spoke to parents during the inspection.
- The views of 17 members of staff who completed the inspection questionnaire were considered.

Inspection team

Anne Bowyer, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Carol Machell

Additional Inspector

Karen Bramwell

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St Helen's Primary Academy is part of the Academies Enterprise Trust. It became a sponsored academy on December 1 2012.
- The number of pupils on roll at the academy is broadly average for primary schools.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for pupil premium funding is above average. The pupil premium funding is additional government funding for looked after children, pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and pupils with a parent in the armed forces.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action and with a statement of special educational needs is below average. The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of their special educational needs is below average.
- Academy consultants and the Regional Director are working with the school to support the improvements needed in leadership and management and teaching and learning.
- The academy meets the government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' learning and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching and learning so that it is consistently good or better by:
 - using assessment information about pupils' achievements and prior learning to plan lessons that meet the needs of the most and least-able, in particular those with special educational needs
 - marking and responding to pupils' work consistently and effectively, so that pupils know how to improve their work and have opportunities to respond, address misconceptions and make corrections
 - using questioning effectively to probe pupils' understanding, deepen their thinking and accelerate their learning within lessons.
- Accelerate the achievement of pupils in reading, writing and mathematics by:
 - making sure teachers do not spend too much time going over things pupils already know, especially the most-able
 - ensuring the individual targets for those pupils with special educational needs are more precise, so that that their knowledge and skills are developed systematically and gaps in learning addressed
 - ensuring that guided reading lessons are used to maximise the skills and learning of all pupils and that progress is checked systematically and accurately
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to write at length across the curriculum
 - precisely focusing teachers' performance targets on closing the gaps in pupils' achievement and regularly checking on the progress of these pupils, so that any underachievement is addressed sooner than later.
- Improve the effectiveness of senior leaders and governors by:
 - establishing an effective system for tracking and recording pupils' progress and ensuring the headteacher has the necessary information at her fingertips to quickly and accurately summarise pupils' progress
 - evaluating precisely the impact of their actions on pupil's achievement

- strengthening the governing body so that is more representative of the wider community and is able to provide objective and effective challenge
- ensuring the governing body meets its statutory duties in relation to the school information regulations 2012.

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

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Overall pupils make expected progress during their time at the school and some pupils make better than expected progress. However, pupils' achievement still requires improvement because their progress is too variable across year groups. The progress of certain groups of pupils such as lower ability pupils, those with special educational needs and the most-able is not good enough.
- Children start school at levels of development typically below those expected for their age. They make expected progress during their time in the Early Years Foundation Stage, so that by the time they enter Key Stage 1, their achievement is still below national expectations.
- In Key Stage 1, a large proportion of pupils are making at least expected progress from their starting points and for some, it is more than expected. Pupils' attainment is rising in reading and mathematics. Current information suggests a higher proportion of pupils are on track to meet national expectations in reading, writing and mathematics. However, there are still too many pupils whose progress is not as good as it should be.
- Actions taken to improve the teaching of phonics (letters and the sounds they make) in Key Stage 1, mean that the proportion of pupils achieving the level expected in Year 1 was above the national average and those pupils who did not reach the required standard in the previous year caught up by the time they started in Key Stage 2.
- Assessments for pupils at the end of Year 6 show that, while there were improvements in mathematics, their attainment is below nationally expected levels. The picture of progress is mixed across Years 3 to 6. Although most pupils are making expected progress and the proportion making better progress is increasing, there are still year groups and subjects where progress is not as strong as it needs to be. For example, in Year 6 staff absence has slowed the rate of progress for these pupils.
- This mixed picture is particularly true for pupils with special educational needs whose progress varies widely. Their attainment is well below national averages. This is because individual targets are too broad and not focused on what pupils need to learn next.
- Pupils known to be eligible for pupil premium funding make good progress so that they achieve as well as their peers. In reading and writing they are a term ahead of their peers, but a term behind in mathematics. Overall, their attainment, like that of their peers, is below national averages.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- The quality of teaching requires improvement because it is too variable.
- Where teaching is good, teachers use what they know about pupils to plan well-organised lessons. They use a variety of strategies which ensure tasks and activities meet the needs of learners. They understand the steps needed to ensure pupils make progress and use questioning to challenge and deepen pupils' thinking. For example, in a Year 5/6 mathematics lesson, pupils were asked, 'How do I know these 3-digit numbers are divisible by 3?' During their discussions, the teacher used questioning to check if pupils could explain their reasoning and challenged their thinking.
- Where teaching requires improvement, lessons do not build on what teachers know about pupils and work is not well-matched to need. Learning objectives are sometimes too generic and do not help pupils to focus on what they need to learn and apply. There is a lack of understanding of the next steps in learning. Questioning is not used as skilfully to probe and develop pupils' understanding.
- The academy has reviewed its marking and feedback policy, but some teachers do not use this consistently. Consequently, in some classes, pupils do not know how they can improve their work. There are very few opportunities for pupils to review and correct their work and, in some

mathematics books, misconceptions are not addressed before pupils move onto the next step in learning.

- Generally, teaching assistants provide good support, especially for those pupils who are on the autistic spectrum, so that they are fully included in lessons and make progress.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- This is strength of the school.
- Leaders have developed clear systems and procedures to ensure pupils are safe and behave well. These are understood by all and are applied consistently and effectively. An effective programme of training for staff ensures they fully understand their responsibilities in making sure pupils behave well and are happy and safe.
- The academy's inclusion leader works tirelessly to support pupils' safety, well-being and behaviour. This means all pupils feel valued, included and ready to learn.
- Older pupils are trained as 'buddies' and take these responsibilities seriously, supporting younger pupils to be happy and safe in the playground.
- Pupils have a good understanding of what bullying and prejudiced based bullying means and say that bullying and name-calling in their school is rare. The positive relationships with adults in school and the curriculum help them to know how to keep safe, including when they use the internet. The academy is creative in its approach to teaching safety and sees this as 'learning for life'.
- Attendance is broadly average. The academy's administration officer has been instrumental in developing and embedding systems and procedures that have improved attendance and punctuality over the last two years.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- In an attempt to track and analyse pupil progress more effectively, the headteacher has tried several systems which has led to confusion and frustration amongst staff. Consequently her ability to evaluate the progress of the academy quickly and precisely is hindered.
- Support from academy consultants is improving how the deputy headteacher and middle leaders lead improvements and form an accurate view of standards in the areas they are responsible for. Consequently, they have a clearer focus in their action planning and the work they need to do. However, this is at an early stage of development and there is not enough impact to ensure the academy is on track to meet its own ambitious targets for improvement.
- Targets for teachers' performance are not focused sharply enough on improving the quality of teaching and accelerating the progress of pupils who are underachieving. This limits the effectiveness of senior leaders and governors in robustly holding teachers to account for their performance.
- Action planning is carefully focused on what the school needs to improve with very clear and measurable outcomes. However, self-evaluation is less precise. Senior leaders are not incisive enough and do not evaluate well enough the impact of actions on pupils' achievement. Consequently the governing body cannot make accurate checks on the academy's progress and hold leaders to account.
- This is an inclusive school, because leaders work hard to ensure all pupils enjoy school, feel safe and are valued. They have invested in a staffing structure that supports this and ensures all pupils are able to focus on their learning. This has a positive effect on behaviour, attendance and attitudes to learning.
- The curriculum promotes the good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils. However, opportunities to practise and apply their writing skills across the curriculum are inconsistent.
- Leaders make appropriate use of pupil premium to ensure that pupils eligible for this funding do

as well as their peers and in many cases, even better. Similarly, sports funding is being used well to promote positive attitudes to sport and healthy lifestyles. The Regional Director of the academy chain visits the academy regularly to check on progress against the action plan and provide challenge. The electronic systems introduced enable leaders to record and evaluate the academy's progress more robustly, but this has not been as effective as it needs to be, because leaders are still getting to grips with the systems.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- The Chair of Governors knows how well the school is doing. He personally challenges senior leaders and has requested clearer evidence of impact on pupil progress. The School Improvement Strategy Group is helping other governors to provide challenge and hold all leaders, including middle leaders, to account for the progress of the school. However, vacancies on the governing body mean that the membership is heavily weighted with staff and governors who are parents. The weakened profile of the governing limits its ability to provide objective challenge and hold leaders to account.
- The governing body meets its statutory duties in relation to safeguarding.
- Governors have not published their plan for, and review of, the use of pupil premium funding and the school sports funding.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	139006
Local authority	Barnsley
Inspection number	433611

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	283
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Glen Banks
Headteacher	Wendy Arnell
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01226 295210
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