

# St Helen's Primary Academy

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

## Inspection dates

17–18 November 2015

## Overall effectiveness

**Requires improvement**

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

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement

- Teaching is not consistently good enough for all pupils in all subjects to make good progress.
- Teachers do not always have high enough expectations of what pupils can achieve, so the most-able learners are not always sufficiently challenged.
- Strategies to improve progress and achievement in reading have not been successful. Staff are not teaching pupils how to read effectively, and opportunities are missed for pupils to read widely and more often.
- In several classes, pupils are asked to complete tasks and activities which are too difficult for them.
- Pupils do not have enough opportunities to practise their writing skills, for example in other subjects.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, together with those who are disadvantaged, do not make enough progress in comparison with pupils nationally.

### The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher and senior leaders know the academy extremely well. The headteacher is resolute in her determination to drive forward further improvements in teaching and outcomes. Now leaders have a clear vision for future development based on a clear understanding of how to get there.
- Governance has been strengthened significantly since the last inspection. Governors are very skilled and knowledgeable about the strengths and weaknesses of the school, and are therefore in a much stronger position to hold leaders to account for their actions.
- Provision in early years is good. Good leadership and teaching are ensuring that children make good progress.
- Pupils are well looked after and cared for. They feel safe and behave well. They show respect for one another and for adults.
- A new approach to the teaching of mathematics is beginning to ensure that pupils are making better progress than they were previously.

## Full report

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

- Secure consistently good or better teaching throughout the school to improve rates of progress for all pupils by:
  - ensuring that teachers have high enough expectations of what pupils are capable of achieving
  - making sure teachers consistently challenge the most-able pupils
  - providing learning opportunities which support those pupils who need additional help in order to make more than expected progress
  - encouraging pupils to read confidently and more often
  - providing increased opportunities for pupils to develop their writing skills
  - ensuring that the academy’s marking policy is consistently applied by all staff, thereby enabling pupils to improve their work.
  
- Provide training for teachers in order to develop their skills in relation to the teaching of reading.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The headteacher has been relentless in her pursuit of improvement since the previous inspection. She has provided clear and incisive leadership. As a result of her determination and commitment, the academy has improved since the previous inspection and is well placed to move forward to secure better progress for all pupils. Furthermore, all staff clearly recognise the progress which has been made and are fully behind the headteacher and senior leaders. Nevertheless, leaders understand that their impact in relation to the effectiveness of certain aspects of teaching on learning must be better in future so that outcomes for pupils become consistently good.
- The headteacher has an extremely accurate picture of the academy's strengths in addition to the areas which need further improvement. A productive, professional relationship with governors means that they too have a shared, accurate picture of what still needs to be done and how to do it.
- There are rigorous systems in place for checking the quality of teaching and improving it. Leaders visit lessons regularly, have discussions with pupils and check their work.
- While not yet good, teaching has improved. Weaknesses in teaching have been identified quickly, and leaders are tackling them effectively. Leaders and governors are ambitious for the pupils, and their high aspirations are underpinning the good progress pupils are now making which is evident in several classes.
- Curriculum and subject leaders are clear about their responsibilities to secure good outcomes in the areas which they lead. They are starting to become involved in monitoring and evaluating the impact of developments to secure improvement. They are benefiting from the experience and expertise of the senior leadership team, which is helping them to become more effective in their roles.
- The leadership team applies effective performance management procedures to hold teachers accountable for the progress pupils make. Targets are tied closely to the academy's planned actions for improvement and are linked to pay progression. Staff training is a high priority and all staff have opportunities to develop their skills and knowledge further through well-planned professional development opportunities.
- Collaborative work for leaders with other academies from within the Academies Enterprise Trust (AET) has strengthened the school's improvement. Opportunities for teachers and leaders to observe good practice have enabled leaders to tailor programmes and packages of support to suit the needs of St Helen's Primary Academy. Furthermore, regional leaders from AET have worked effectively with subject leaders in English and mathematics to identify where improvements are necessary and to support the planning of actions to address these issues.
- Pupils' preparation for life in modern Britain is effective because they are taught about the importance of democracy, the rule of law and respect for other cultures and faiths.
- The leadership team has redesigned the curriculum in order to engage pupils more effectively by focusing on their interests. There is a good range of after-school clubs, which are very popular. These, along with enrichment activities and curriculum visits, for example to a local mining museum, are contributing to the progress pupils are making, along with the promotion of their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The academy uses the primary school physical education and sport premium effectively to promote pupils' physical development and to extend their sporting opportunities. Specialist coaches are used to provide good quality teaching for pupils and training for staff.
- Leaders at all levels have established very strong relationships with parents. The very large majority of parents are overwhelmingly positive about the work of the school. They are particularly pleased with the information they receive about their children and appreciate how well they are cared for.
- Over time gaps between the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and others in the academy and nationally have started to close. Effective use of pupil premium funding is improving equality of opportunity in mathematics and writing, but not in reading.
- **The governance of the school**
  - The knowledgeable and well-skilled governing body has played a vital role in helping the academy's leaders make improvements since the last inspection. Governors have worked extremely closely with senior leaders to ensure that weaknesses are tackled.
  - Governors have a very accurate view of the strengths of the academy and how well pupils are learning. They use data and information from the academy's leaders to identify where further improvements are necessary. This not only supports the academy's leaders, but also holds them to account through robust and challenging questioning.

- Governors receive relevant training which enables them to carry out their roles effectively. Additionally, governors have a vast array of skills and knowledge from outside education which strengthens the work of the governing body considerably, and allows them to make strategic decisions which will drive further improvement.
- The arrangements for safeguarding pupils are effective and meet all statutory requirements. Procedures are firmly established and the day-to-day management, care and protection of pupils are secure.

## **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment** requires improvement

- Overall, teaching requires improvement because it is not consistently good enough in all classes. As a result, pupils' progress is uneven, particularly in reading and writing.
- Some teachers do not have high enough expectations of what pupils can do. In some classes, the most-able pupils are not being challenged to think deeply, and are not given enough opportunities to explain what they have found out. This means that opportunities to pick up any misconceptions are sometimes missed.
- In some classes, the work pupils are expected to do is too hard in English and mathematics. Even though these pupils have adults in the classrooms to support them, they are not able to complete the work as they are missing some of the basic skills to enable them to do so. Consequently, these pupils are not making good enough progress.
- The teaching of reading requires improvement because pupils are not being taught how to read and analyse the texts effectively. Pupils are not secure in their word-building skills and some are unable to spell accurately. This is because teachers lack the skills required to teach this subject successfully. As a result, pupils are not making enough progress in reading throughout the academy.
- Teachers have varied expectations about the quality of work which is expected in different classes and across a range of different subjects. There are some examples of work which is presented neatly, but some books are untidy. This is because the expectations of what pupils are capable of doing are not high enough.
- Marking and feedback in pupils' books are being used to move learning on effectively in some classes. However, this is inconsistent across the academy. Where teachers' feedback is effective, pupils are using the comments to build upon their prior learning. Where pupils' work is not marked, or teachers are not following the academy's policy, pupils are not making the progress of which they are capable.
- Opportunities for pupils to practise their reading and writing skills in other subjects are not embedded. Consequently, pupils do not have the confidence or experience to improve their skills at a faster pace.
- Leaders have established a rigorous assessment procedure throughout the academy. This is enabling teachers to know where pupils are at the beginning of a unit of work using a 'cold task'. This is when there has been no teaching input. Pupils' skills are then determined during a 'hot task'. This is carried out after pupils have been taught the knowledge and have had opportunities to practise the skills. This enables teachers to ascertain where to move the teaching on to next. This is having a positive impact, particularly in mathematics, where pupils are making better progress.
- The teaching of mathematics has improved across the academy. This is a result of teachers having focused training to deliver the new mathematics curriculum through a planned, systematic approach. Consequently, progress and outcomes for pupils in mathematics have improved.

## **Personal development, behaviour and welfare** is good

### **Personal development and welfare**

- The academy's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- The academy promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very well. This strong emphasis on personal development permeates all aspects of the academy's work and makes a significant contribution to all pupils' personal well-being.
- Pupils feel looked after and very safe. They report that they enjoy attending the academy and this is reflected in improved attendance over time.
- Pupils benefit from being given time to reflect on current world issues and can confidently talk about how these may affect them. For example, Year 6 pupils revealed their thoughts about events during the recent incidents in Paris by composing some thought-provoking prayers.

- Pupils know how to keep themselves safe, both in the academy and in the community. Pupils talk confidently about keeping themselves safe online, and they have benefited from working very closely with the fire service on important health and safety issues.
- Parents appreciate how well the staff look after their children. They are extremely positive about the time taken to communicate with them when their child experiences any difficulty, and are delighted that the headteacher puts the children's welfare as her top priority.
- Staff encourage pupils to take on responsibilities around the academy, including becoming members of the school council. Pupils learn about democracy as part of this process. Furthermore, older pupils look after younger pupils, for example by being buddies during playtimes and organising small games and activities to engage them.
- Pupils look out for other pupils who may be feeling upset or sad. For example, pupils talked about how they welcomed a pupil into the academy who could not speak English by attempting to learn some of the new pupil's language. They articulated clearly how pupils new to the academy may feel and wanted to make it easier for them.
- Pupils who need additional help and support to aid them in their learning and social activities are receiving good-quality guidance and support. Pupils know who to go to for help, and are not afraid to ask for it.

### **Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Most staff set high expectations of behaviour, which results in the majority of pupils behaving well. There are appropriate systems in place to deal with incidents effectively, and pupils know that inappropriate behaviour is always dealt with swiftly.
- Pupils are very courteous, well-mannered and eager to please. They follow the academy's rules carefully and ensure that other pupils around them are doing the same.
- Pupils say that they think behaviour is good in the academy and that it has improved over the past year. Views of pupils are echoed when one pupil stated, 'Teachers help us to learn how to do the right thing.' Another stated, 'Name-calling is wrong because it hurts inside your heart.'
- Pupils are kind, considerate and respectful to each other. They listen to each other and like to work together both in lessons and outside, resulting in fewer disagreements.
- Pupils know about bullying and various forms it takes, including cyber bullying. They are very clear about what to do if they experience any issues in this area, and are confident in the knowledge that the staff take a zero tolerance approach towards bullying.
- Most pupils have positive attitudes to learning and settle to work promptly. A few pupils are sometimes slow to settle, and there are instances of low-level disruption when pupils are not challenged sufficiently or they find the work too difficult.

### **Outcomes for pupils**

### **require improvement**

- Progress is still not consistently good in all classes and across all subjects: therefore outcomes for pupils require improvement. However, as a result of recent improvements in teaching and greater expectations from some teachers, rates of progress are rising steadily. By the end of Year 6 in 2015, a greater proportion of pupils than previously made at least expected progress in Key Stage 2, and more exceeded this – particularly in mathematics.
- The proportion of Key Stage 1 pupils achieving the expected standard in phonics (letters and the sounds they make) is still below the national average, although it is improving over time.
- In the 2015 national assessments and tests at the end of Years 2 and 6, not enough pupils attained the higher levels in reading and mathematics. This is because pupils, particularly the most able, are not challenged enough.
- The underachievement of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs has not been addressed quickly enough in the past. As a result, gaps in attainment compared to pupils nationally in reading, writing and mathematics are not closing fast enough. While there have been improvements in the amount of progress pupils are making throughout the academy in mathematics, reading and writing, it is not consistent in every class.
- In 2015, the attainment of disadvantaged pupils eligible for support through the pupil premium was below that of pupils nationally in reading and writing at the end of Key Stage 1 and in reading at the end

of Key Stage 2. Furthermore, disadvantaged pupils are not making the same progress in reading as their peers. Current information suggests that these pupils are now making better progress across the academy in mathematics; gaps are beginning to close in writing, but gaps are not closing in reading.

- The proportion of children who leave the early years with a good level of development has increased over time. In 2015, this proportion was above the national average. From low starting points, children in the early years make good progress.
- Standards at the end of Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 in 2015 are lower than the national average. However, given the pupils' low starting points, a number of pupils have made accelerated progress in Key Stage 1, particularly in mathematics. In addition, pupils in Key Stage 2 have made better progress than in previous years in mathematics.

## Early years provision

**is good**

- Children enter the early years with skills, language and knowledge below those typical for their age. Strong routines are quickly established, and as a result children are showing very positive attitudes to their learning.
- The proportion of children achieving a good level of development is increasing over time, and in 2015 this proportion was above the national average. This is a result of an improvement in the quality of teaching, enabling children to make a good start in their education. This ensures that children are now ready for the transition to Year 1.
- Relationships in the early years are a strength and are having a positive impact on the good progress children are making. Staff build very positive relationships with parents right from the start, and daily opportunities for parents to help their children learn through 'morning work' further strengthen these ties.
- Behaviour is good. Children work and play well together and can concentrate on their learning for sustained periods of time. This ensures that children learn at a fast pace.
- Disadvantaged children in the early years achieve well from their starting points. Staff work well with other agencies, such as an external speech and language consultant, to provide early support and to ensure that gaps are closing.
- The provision is well led. Adults know the children well, and plan together to ensure that opportunities and activities are available for children to build on their learning in order to take the next steps in their development.
- The children find the outdoor provision particularly attractive because it is well resourced and activities are well planned to match the pupils' own interests. Children are developing their skills in all areas of learning outside and are keen to explore and find out things for themselves. The indoor environment in the nursery is not as stimulating for the children.
- Child protection and safeguarding arrangements are thorough and there are no breaches in welfare arrangements. Staff ensure that children's individual needs are catered for and that they are kept safe and know how to stay safe.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	139006
<b>Local authority</b>	Barnsley
<b>Inspection number</b>	10002176

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Academy sponsor-led
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	336
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Glen Banks
<b>Headteacher/Principal/Teacher in charge</b>	Michelle Foster
<b>Telephone number</b>	01226 295210
<b>Website</b>	<a href="https://sites.google.com/a/aetinet.org/st-helen-s-primary-academy/home">https://sites.google.com/a/aetinet.org/st-helen-s-primary-academy/home</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:dtasker@sthelensprimaryacademy.org">dtasker@sthelensprimaryacademy.org</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	10–11 December 2013

## Information about this school

- St Helen's Primary Academy is part of the Academies Enterprise Trust. It became a sponsored academy on 1 December 2012.
- A new headteacher has been appointed since the previous inspection, and the governing body has been restructured.
- The number of pupils on roll at the academy is above average for primary schools.
- Children attend part-time in Nursery and full-time in Reception.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium is above average. The pupil premium 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 disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is higher than average.
- The academy meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress by the end of Year 6.
- The academy manages its own breakfast club and offers a range of after-school activities.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in a range of lessons and also made some short visits to classrooms. The headteacher jointly observed the quality of teaching in two lessons with the lead inspector.
- Inspectors listened to a range of pupils read and reviewed the work in pupils' books alongside academy leaders.
- Pupils' behaviour in lessons and during break and lunchtime was observed.
- Inspectors talked informally to pupils in lessons and around the academy and held formal meetings with pupils from across Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2.
- Inspectors held discussions with the headteacher, senior leaders, subject leaders, class teachers, governors and a representative from the Academies Enterprise Trust.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation, including the academy's evaluation of its own performance, school improvement planning, documents monitoring the effectiveness of teaching and learning, minutes of governing body meetings, the academy's own policies and documentation relating to safeguarding and attendance.
- Inspectors took into account the views of parents at the start and end of the day, in addition to 53 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View).
- Inspectors took into account the 17 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire, in addition to the academy's own survey of pupils' views.

## Inspection team

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Her Majesty's Inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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