



St Helen's Catholic Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 115147
LEA SOUTHEND-ON-SEA LEA
Inspection number 279523
Inspection dates 13 July 2006 to 14 July 2006
Reporting inspector Mrs. Jacqueline Marshall AI

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	North Road
School category	Voluntary aided		SS0 7AY
Age range of pupils	4 to 11		
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01702 343823
Number on roll	203	Fax number	01702 437065
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs. Mary Glen
Date of previous inspection	18 September 2000	Headteacher	Mrs. Elizabeth Mouchel

Age group 4 to 11	Inspection dates 13 July 2006 - 14 July 2006	Inspection number 279523
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

St Helen's is an average-sized Catholic primary school. Attainment on entry to the school is below the expected levels for pupils of the same age. An average proportion of pupils is eligible for free school meals. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties is average overall, though in some classes, including the current Year 2, the proportion is well above average. The large majority of pupils are of White British heritage. A greater than average proportion of pupils speak English as an additional language.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

St Helen's is a good, caring school that provides an effective education for its pupils. The school and the parents agree with this evaluation. Pupils enjoy coming to school, behave well and have an excellent understanding of how to keep healthy, because of the high priority the school places on this. These aspects of personal development, along with their caring attitudes to one another, contribute significantly to their achievements. Provision in the Reception class is good and means children get off to a solid start in their learning from below-average starting points. By the time they start Year 1 they are reaching the expected levels for their age. All groups of pupils make good progress and achieve well because teaching is good. Teachers use assessment information to plan work that is matched to pupils' needs, though occasionally this could be used more effectively to provide even greater challenge. Whilst teachers generally give good support and guidance, their marking of pupils' work is not consistent enough to ensure that they all know exactly what to do next in order to improve. Leadership and management of the school are good. As a result of the strong leadership of the headteacher, all leaders, staff and governors, have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The school has made good progress since the last inspection and has a good capacity to improve further. The school gives good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards further by using assessment more consistently to check how well pupils are doing and to plan lessons that challenge all pupils. - Raise achievement further through a more consistent approach to marking so that pupils always know exactly what they need to do next to improve their learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

All pupils achieve well during their time at the school and as a result, standards reached by Year 6 pupils have risen steadily in recent years. Children's attainments on entry to school are below the levels expected for their age, particularly in their communication and language skills. Children currently in the Reception class have made good progress, so that most are in line with national expectations as they approach the start of Year 1. As a result of good teaching and increasingly effective checks on pupils' progress, most, regardless of their background or learning difficulties, are on course to meet the challenging targets that the school sets for them. In the 2005 tests at the end of Year 2, most pupils made good progress to achieve nationally expected standards from a below average start to Year 1. In the current Year 2 class, overall standards are below those in schools nationally. However, this does not represent a decline in pupils' achievement, because there are larger than average proportions of pupils with learning difficulties and pupils who are at the early stages of learning English. Good teaching has ensured that these pupils have also done well, particularly in writing, which has

been an area of focus for the school this year. Effective teaching for the oldest pupils secures continued good achievement in Years 3 to 6. In 2005, Year 6 pupils attained above-average standards in mathematics and science and average standards in English. Inspection evidence indicates that standards remain above average overall in the current Year 6.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good and their understanding of how to be healthy is outstanding because pupils are strongly encouraged to adopt healthy lifestyles through healthy eating, walk / cycle to school schemes, regular sport and well equipped play areas that effectively encourage physical activity. As a result, the school received a national award in recognition of its campaign to promote good health. Pupils enjoy school, reporting that 'learning is fun'. They are polite and behave well. Many opportunities are provided for pupils to be part of the community and take responsibilities, for example as 'Peacemakers' from Year 2 onwards. Pupils' involvement, particularly that of the school council, in improving aspects of school life and in creating the schools 'respect' mission statement is good. They respond well to this trust, showing respect and care for others both in their school and wider communities. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development has improved since the last inspection and is now good. Pupils behave safely and enjoy opportunities to work in teams, effectively developing skills that contribute to their future economic well-being. Attendance is similar to the national average, although it is adversely affected by the significant minority of families who take term-time holidays.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Pupils enjoy lessons and behaviour is good because they have good relationships with adults. Pupils find the work interesting, responding particularly well when good links are made between subjects, such as between literacy and information and communication technology (ICT). Teaching assistants effectively support learning of individuals or groups because they know the needs of pupils and adapt their approaches accordingly. Where teaching and learning are best, teachers regularly share with pupils what they need to do next to improve and activities are carefully planned to motivate and engage them. Pupils say learning in these lessons is 'really fun'. Teachers regularly use questions to encourage pupils to think about their learning and give reasons for their answers. However at times, the questions limit pupils' responses and do not give them enough opportunity to share their ideas. Whilst teachers plan activities for pupils' differing needs, lessons occasionally lack the pace and good progress that characterise the best practice. This is because some teachers do not always make enough use of assessment and pupil

targets to plan lessons that are consistently challenging. The quality of marking is mostly good, though it is not always clear to pupils how they can improve their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides a good, well-planned curriculum. Teachers work together well to create good links between subjects to enhance pupils' enjoyment and learning. Recent changes, such as the introduction of 'W.H.E.L.K.S.' day (We at St Helens's enjoy learning, knowledge and skills), are a key factor in pupils' positive attitudes to learning because good links are made between subjects. Personal, social and health education very effectively supports pupils' overall development, particularly their approach to healthy living. An emphasis on developing pupils' basic skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT contributes effectively to pupils' good progress. The school has a well thought-out approach to visits and visitors, which enhance classroom learning and foster pupils' positive attitudes. Specialist teaching in music and modern foreign languages and the wide range of extra-curricular activities develop pupils' interest and skills still further.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. This is a caring school which welcomes all children, whatever their needs. This is a view held by the overwhelming majority of pupils and parents. Child protection and health and safety procedures are well understood and any pupils who are at risk are quickly identified and supported well. Pupils say that relationships within the school are good, that they know who to turn to if necessary and are clear that any incident will be dealt with promptly and effectively. They are encouraged to care for one another so that the youngest pupils in the school are supported well by older pupils, who help them to gain in confidence. Support both for pupils at the early stages of learning English and those with learning difficulties is well planned and outside agencies and parents are involved effectively. The school has introduced effective procedures to track pupils' progress more carefully through each year. Information gained is used well by some teachers in order to provide pupils with challenging targets and when planning further work, though this is not yet consistent practise across the school. Marking is good overall, although some teachers' marking is more effective than others'. The school is aware of the need to involve pupils more in checking how well they are doing and understanding the next steps in their learning.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management at all levels are good. All leaders, staff, pupils and parents share the head's clear vision of a school that is constantly striving to improve and where every child is important. The headteacher strongly encourages teamwork throughout the school and consequently, there is a clear, shared understanding of the

school's overall effectiveness. The leaders know what is needed to take the school forward because they have an accurate picture of the school's strengths and weaknesses as a result of good self-evaluation. The school's leaders have clearly demonstrated a good capacity to improve the school further. Improvement since the last inspection has been good, in particular in the quality of governance. The governing body contributes effectively to this success. Governors are caring, supportive and active in school. They are fully involved in all major decisions and fulfil their responsibilities well. Furthermore, standards in writing are higher and, through regular checks, leaders have maintained and improved the quality of teaching, though they need to sharpen their focus to ensure greater consistency across the school. The school regularly seeks and takes into account the views of parents and other stakeholders.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

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

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	3	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	NA

The quality of provision

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

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for talking to us and showing us your work when we visited your school. We are pleased to hear that you really like school and that the grown-ups are very kind and look after you well. We think that they are good at helping you to know just what you have to do to keep safe and healthy. We were happy to hear that there are plenty of things for you to enjoy at playtimes and lots of exciting things to take part in, such as the large number of visits and visitors, a wide range of clubs and the fun activities you have on your W.H.E.L.K.S. days. We think you are very polite to adults, and behave well in and around your school. You are good at living up to your mission statement to respect each other in your school and in the wider community. In order to make your learning even better, we have asked the adults at your school to make sure that: - you are always given lots of tasks and activities that stretch you to do your very best - all teachers help you to understand what you need to do to improve your work. Thank you again for helping us with our work.