

Inspection of a school judged outstanding for overall effectiveness before September 2024: St Helen's Church of England Primary School

Greenhill, Alveston, Bristol BS35 2QX

Inspection dates:

29 and 30 January 2025

Outcome

St Helen's Church of England Primary School has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

St Helen's is a happy and friendly school. Pupils form positive relationships with each other and staff. This helps them to enjoy school. Pupils share any worries they have with adults, who help to solve them. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) who struggle with their emotions are given effective support in 'The Nest'. This helps pupils to manage their behaviour better in the classroom. The school has ambitions for its pupils to 'fly high'. Typically, these are realised but the school is ambitious for pupils to learn even more.

The school has a calm and purposeful atmosphere. In lessons, pupils behave well. In the early years, children listen well to adults. Pupils work hard and take pride in the presentation of their work. They discuss their learning with enthusiasm. Pupils develop a love of literature in the school's impressive 'reading plane'.

Pupils benefit from an interesting and wide range of clubs in which to develop new interests. Sport has a high profile. Pupils talk proudly about representing the school in tournaments. This helps them to understand the importance of teamwork. Older pupils learn about independence and perseverance through residential trips. They apply these newfound skills well back in class.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Pupils learn a broad and ambitious curriculum starting in the Reception Year. It outlines clearly the knowledge that pupils should know. This means that teachers know precisely what to teach. The school continues to review its work to address any weaknesses. This

ensures the school sustains its performance. For example, the school identified spelling as a weaker element of its curriculum. It is now addressing the way in which it teaches spelling to further improve writing outcomes.

In lessons, teachers present new information clearly. They question pupils to check that they understand what to do. In mathematics, teachers use 'checkpoints' effectively in order to identify which pupils need further help. Across the curriculum, pupils typically build new knowledge well. For example, younger pupils demonstrate impressive recall about historical figures. Teachers ensure that they present new learning in a logical order. This helps pupils to apply prior knowledge to new concepts. However, on some occasions, teachers give pupils work that does not match the high ambition of the curriculum or its design does not deepen pupils' knowledge sufficiently. Consequently, it limits what pupils can learn.

The school has clear systems for identifying pupils with SEND. It has robust transition procedures into the school to ensure staff get to know children and their families well. Staff help some pupils with SEND with their social and emotional needs successfully. However, this is not consistent. Some pupils with cognition and learning needs do not receive the same effective support. Staff do not ensure that their provision matches what is on their individual learning plans. When this happens, pupils do not receive the scaffolding and support they need. For example, some pupils do not have the resources they need to help them access the curriculum. This prevents them learning with increasing fluency and independence.

Reading is a strength of the school. Pupils learn the phonics code well in the early years. Their success continues as pupils move into key stage 1. This is because staff are well trained and have secure subject knowledge. Pupils who fall behind are quickly spotted. Staff give them precise support to help them catch up. In key stage 2, pupils learn to analyse increasingly complex texts. This is reflected in pupils' high outcomes in the 2024 national tests.

Pupils develop strong leadership skills through roles and responsibilities, such as 'Reception Buddies' and house captains. They learn about other faiths and cultures through visitors into school, such as a Ugandan band. This helps to prepare them for life beyond their locality. Pupils have a clear understanding of moral issues through assemblies. Through the curriculum, pupils have a secure knowledge of how to stay safe online.

Pupils' positive behaviour in the classroom extends to social times. They mix together well on the playground. Pupils enjoy the range of activities on offer. For example, some pupils help to maintain the school grounds. This promotes a sense of pride in the school. Pupils are polite and courteous to visitors.

The members of the governing body know the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They make checks on the school, such as its safeguarding work. Governors keep a close eye on changes and consider its impact. For example, they know how 'The Nest' is helping to provide support for pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs.

Staff's workload has improved recently, following a period where they raised concerns. They feel that the school takes these issues seriously and acts on them. Staff support each other well and are proud to work at the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- On some occasions, teachers give work to pupils that does not support them to learn the intended curriculum. When this happens, pupils do not secure the knowledge they need or develop a sufficient depth of understanding of important concepts. The school needs to ensure that teachers consistently provide work to pupils that supports them to achieve the knowledge and skills identified in the school's curriculum.
- A few pupils with SEND are not provided with the support identified on their learning plans and so learning is not adapted well enough. When this happens, these pupils do not learn well. The school should develop staff's expertise to provide pupils with SEND with the precise support identified on learning plans to help them learn with increasing fluency and independence.

Background

Until September 2024, on a graded (section 5) inspection we gave schools an overall effectiveness grade, in addition to the key and provision judgements. Overall effectiveness grades given before September 2024 will continue to be visible on school inspection reports and on Ofsted's website. From September 2024, graded inspections will not include an overall effectiveness grade. This school was, before September 2024, judged outstanding for its overall effectiveness.

We have now inspected the school to determine whether it has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at that previous inspection. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school's work has improved significantly or that it may not be as strong as it was at the last inspection, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection. A graded inspection is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be outstanding for overall effectiveness in December 2019.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	109158
Local authority	South Gloucestershire
Inspection number	10344443
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	207
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	David Gordon
Headteacher	Julie Simpson (executive headteacher) Kelvin Chappell (head of school)
Website	www.sthelensprimary.org.uk
Dates of previous inspection	17 and 18 December 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- In 2023, the school formed the Schools of the Federation of St Helen's and St Mary's along with one other school.
- Since the last inspection, a significant number of the teaching staff have changed.
- The school runs a breakfast provision.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and has taken that into account in his evaluation of the school.

- The inspector met with senior leaders, groups of staff, members of the governing body, a representative from the local authority and a challenge partner commissioned by the local authority.
- The inspector visited a sample of lessons, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The inspector observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school site.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- The inspector considered the responses to the online survey for parents and carers, Ofsted Parent View, including free-text comments. The inspector also considered responses to the staff survey and responses to the survey for pupils.

Inspection team

Jason Edge, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked-after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2025