

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

Durham Street, Hartlepool TS24 0HG

Inspection dates:

1 and 2 April 2025

Outcome

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

The headteacher of this school is Marcus Newing. This school is part of Northern Lights Learning Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Jo Heaton, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Katie Hammond.

What is it like to attend this school?

This school is at the heart of its local community. Pupils are proud to attend. They recognise the care and support they receive from the staff who work with them. Pupils feel safe in this nurturing and welcoming school.

Leaders and staff at the school share high expectations for all pupils. It is brought to life through the ambitious curriculum and the school's wider offer beyond classroom. Pupils rise to the expectations set for them and achieve well in school. This success is also reflected in the school's published outcomes.

Children in early years are enthusiastic and eager to learn. These attitudes to learning continue as pupils move through school. Pupils work in calm and purposeful classrooms. They behave well in and around school. Pupils know that, if they have a worry or concern, adults in school are quick to help them.

Pupils are encouraged to be kind and respectful members of the school and local area. Pupils understand how they can make a difference for themselves and each other. Thoughtful community work with local older residents in school and contributions to the local food bank help pupils to understand the difference they can make in the world.

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

The school's curriculum is broad and ambitious. Starting in the early years, it is carefully built to help prepare pupils for their next steps in learning. For example, in mathematics the school has worked together to make sure children leaving early years have the correct knowledge and skills to be able to access the chosen mathematics scheme in Year 1. Staff support pupils effectively with their new learning. In mathematics, pupils work with staff through guided activities before practising and applying their new skills independently. Pupils have regular opportunities to recall their previous learning across the curriculum. This helps pupils link together one lesson to the next. 'Throwback Thursdays' help pupils to remember learning from previous topics and year groups. The school's checks on learning help pupils to recall their learning about different artists or how natural disasters impact countries like Bangladesh.

Children in early years make a positive start to reading and writing. They enjoy joining in with books and rhymes in Nursery, before learning the skills to decode in Reception Year. In early years, children develop their mark making skills in creative ways. This helps them prepare to write effectively. Older pupils read regularly both in English and for pleasure. They talk about the wide range of books they enjoy.

The school is skilful in identifying pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). In classrooms, staff support pupils with SEND to use a range of resources well. Pupils who access their learning through the school's resourced provision are supported to communicate in a range of ways. This helps pupils share their interests, needs and wants well. Sometimes the support plans used for pupils with SEND across the school have targets that are too broad. This means some pupils are not effectively supported in their learning as they could be. The school is prioritising work with staff to make this more consistent across school.

The school has high expectations of behaviour. Routines and expectations are clear from the moment children start in the early years. Children play and learn together well. They take turns and share equipment when going on a bear hunt. Pupils across school are strong role models to each other. They enjoy celebrating each other's achievements.

The school has carefully considered how the personal, social, and health education curriculum works together with the rest of the school's offer. Aspects such as fundamental British values are woven through the school's ethos and are a part of everyday life in school. Pupils are able to talk with precision and detail about their understanding. They are also knowledgeable about aspects of protected characteristics. 'Moral Mondays' help pupils to think about their behaviour and beliefs. Pupils talk and debate different topics maturely. The school offers a wide range of extra-curricular activities. Pupils enjoy clubs focused on their favourite musical performers or how to look after the school's beehives.

Leaders, including with those responsible for the governance and the trust, work effectively to improve the school. Staff say they are well supported by leaders who are approachable and listen to them. Staff at all stages of their careers benefit from effective professional development.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some SEND support plans lack precision. This leads to variability in the support some pupils receive. The school should further strengthen staff expertise to ensure that all pupils with SEND are consistently well supported in their learning and plans are revised effectively.

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 good 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 predecessor school, St Helen's Primary School, the school to be good for overall effectiveness in January 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	148986
Local authority	Hartlepool Borough
Inspection number	10346803
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	267
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Katie Hammond
CEO of the trust	Jo Heaton
Headteacher	Marcus Newing
Website	www.sthelensprimaryschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school is part of Northern Lights Learning Trust.
- There has been a change of headteacher and deputy headteacher since the previous inspection.
- The school has an additionally resourced provision, funded by the local authority, for pupils with communication and language difficulties who have an education, health and care plan. This provision has places for 25 pupils aged between 4 and 11. There are currently 13 pupils on roll who access this provision. This provision is referred to as 'The Beacon' by the school community.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The school offers a breakfast club managed by the school.
- The school has nursery provision for two- and three-year-olds.

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 their evaluation of the school.
- Prior to the inspection, the inspector reviewed documents on the school's website, as well as published information about the school's performance and previous Ofsted inspections.
- The inspector spoke with the headteacher and other leaders in the school.
- The inspector visited a sample of lessons, spoke with pupils about their learning and looked at pupils' work. The inspector held discussions with leaders responsible for attendance and behaviour.
- 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 gathered views of parents in person and through responses to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View, and free-text responses. The views of staff were considered through the staff survey and through meetings with them. Pupils' views were considered through pupil meetings.
- The inspector spoke with representatives from the local governing body, the chair of trustees, other leaders within the trust and the CEO from the trust.
- The inspector observed pupils' behaviour in classes and at social times.

Inspection team

Emily Stevens, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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