

Inspection of St Helen's Catholic Primary School

North Road, Westcliff-on-Sea, Essex SS0 7AY

Inspection dates: 8 and 9 February 2023

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

What is it like to attend this school?

A culture of mutual respect flows through the school. This creates a warm and welcoming environment. Pupils rise to the high expectations adults have of them. The mantra of 'kind hands, kind feet, kind words' guides pupils to get on well. They enjoy one another's company and are polite and friendly. Adults want pupils to be happy and feel safe. This is certainly the case.

Bullying is rare. Pupils know it is right to speak up if they have a problem. They know adults will help them if they have worries or concerns. Pupils know they are all different. These differences are shared and celebrated in school. Everyone is treated as an individual no matter their background, culture or belief. Pupils know this is how it should be.

Pupils have a wide range of opportunities to play an active role in the life of the school and local community. The school council and eco-council, for example, meet regularly. Its members work together and take positive action, such as raising money for charities and working to change the school dinner menu. Pupils also vote for a 'citizen of the year' award, recognising individual achievements in school.

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

Leaders want to provide pupils with a curriculum that provides the experiences needed for success. As pupils move through the school, they learn well in many subjects, and they develop detailed knowledge. Teachers make lessons interesting. They explain new ideas and concepts clearly, checking regularly that what is taught is remembered. This assessment information is used well to adapt future lessons if needed. In a small number of subjects, pupils do not develop a deep knowledge and do not learn so well. This is because leaders have not been sufficiently precise when outlining the knowledge they expect pupils to know and remember.

The youngest pupils become accurate and confident readers. Adults teach the school's chosen phonics programme well. The disruption caused by COVID-19 resulted in a significant number of pupils not being able to read as fluently as they should by the end of Year 1. These pupils are now catching up rapidly. This is because the extra support they receive is expertly delivered and precisely matched to their needs.

Children in the Reception classes are taught to become independent from a young age. They look after their classrooms and the equipment they use with great care. Adults are skilled at helping the youngest to understand and use many new words. They ask questions to encourage children to explain what they are learning and make them think hard. Consequently, they are well prepared for their move to Year 1.

Leaders identify pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) accurately. Adults make appropriate adaptations to activities these pupils complete.

This means those with SEND learn the same curriculum as their peers and achieve well. Although the provision for pupils with SEND is effective, leaders do not have a clear enough oversight of how well these pupils are doing. Some record-keeping lacks precision. Leaders cannot clearly identify what is working well and where provision needs further refinement.

The well-considered personal development programme helps pupils develop beyond the academic curriculum. Pupils have an age-appropriate understanding of healthy relationships, along with knowing how to look after their mental health. Along with a wide range of clubs, trips and visits, pupils raise money for a range of charities. This includes taking part in the 'big sleep' overnight in the school hall to raise awareness of homelessness. These opportunities help pupils develop into responsible and active citizens. The school's Rainbow Room provides well-tailored support for pupils who need a quiet space. Activities such as gardening and relaxation sessions support pupils' social and emotional needs well. Pupils delight in seeing their gardening efforts recognised in the annual Southend in Bloom competition.

Pupils behave well, meaning the school is a calm and orderly place. Lessons are rarely disturbed.

Teachers welcome the support provided by their managers. Leaders consider workload when making changes. Teachers receive appropriate training to help them continue developing their practice. Those who are new to the profession receive high-quality support and guidance.

Governors and trustees have a clear and accurate view of the school's strengths, and what needs to be even better. Many governors are relatively new. They regularly seek out training from the local authority or diocese to support them to further improve their knowledge and skills.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The regular and relevant training staff receive helps them identify if a pupil is at risk of harm. Any concerns are reported in a timely way and leaders follow these up quickly. Leaders do not delay in accessing help from external agencies when needed. Leaders make all required checks on adults before they start work in school.

The curriculum is well designed to teach pupils to keep safe. They learn how to stay safe online. This includes knowing how to turn off location settings on devices and knowing the information they should not share online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a small number of subjects, leaders have not precisely identified the important knowledge they want pupils to learn. Pupils do not develop a detailed knowledge in these subjects. Leaders should ensure they clearly identify this important knowledge so pupils learn well across the whole curriculum.
- While systems are in place to identify and support pupils with SEND, they do not consistently provide leaders with a clear and precise oversight of the effectiveness of the SEND provision. Leaders should ensure that their records provide them with accurate information as to how pupils with SEND achieve, so they can evaluate more effectively the SEND provision across the school.

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](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	146015
Local authority	Southend-on-Sea
Inspection number	10255051
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	422
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Frank McEvoy
Headteacher	Elizabeth Mouchel
Website	www.st-helens.southend.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school joined the Assisi Catholic Trust on 1 September 2018.
- The school has a religious character. The school's most recent section 48 inspection took place in December 2016. The school's next section 48 inspection will be within eight school years.
- The school does not use any alternative providers.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, art, science and history. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with some

pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The lead inspector listened to pupils from Years 1, 2 and 3 read to an adult.

- Inspectors spoke with leaders and pupils about several other subjects.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher and assistant headteachers, who also hold the roles of special educational needs coordinator and the early years leader. The lead inspector met with members of the governing body, trustees and the chief executive officer. The lead inspector also held separate telephone calls with a representative of the local authority and a representative of the Diocese of Brentwood.
- To inspect safeguarding, inspectors scrutinised the single central record, reviewed safeguarding paperwork and systems. Inspectors spoke with leaders, teachers, support staff, members of the governing body, trustees and pupils to evaluate the culture of safeguarding in the school.
- Inspectors considered 58 responses, to Ofsted's questionnaire for parents, Ofsted Parent View. Inspectors also considered 26 responses to the staff questionnaire, and 38 responses to the pupil questionnaire.

Inspection team

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