

Inspection of a good school: Longhorsley St Helen's Church of England Aided First School

Drummonds Close, Longhorsley, Morpeth, Northumberland NE65 8UT

Inspection date: 10 February 2022

Outcome

Longhorsley St Helen's Church of England Aided First School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

This is a small school that feels like a family where everybody knows each other well. Staff make sure that pupils are well cared for and remain safe. Many parents and carers comment that the school goes 'above and beyond' to support the development of their children.

The school's values and ethos are clear to see in pupils' good conduct and in how they care for each other. Positive relationships between pupils and adults generate a culture of trust and respect. There is support in place for a small number of pupils who need help to manage their behaviour. Staff make sure that all pupils are supported emotionally and that their pastoral needs are met. Leaders and staff want the best for pupils. They build effective relationships with families to ensure that pupils receive the best care.

Pupils feel safe at Longhorsley St Helen's. Behaviour around school and in lessons is positive. Pupils enjoy playing as part of the wide range of activities during breaktimes. They say that bullying does not happen, but that if it were to, staff would sort it out.

High expectations begin in early years, where children learn the routines that they need in order to work and play together. The learning environment is inviting and carefully planned to ensure that children gain essential knowledge and skills.

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

Leaders have planned an ambitious curriculum for all pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The programmes of study are carefully planned in most subjects, including in English and mathematics. Leaders have ordered content carefully so that new learning builds on what pupils have learned previously. This helps children from early years onwards to know more and remember more. For example,

in mathematics, pupils use their knowledge of multiplication tables to explore different ways of multiplying. Pupils know the importance of knowing their multiplication tables to help them tackle more challenging problems.

Most subject leaders have strong subject knowledge. They provide valuable information for teachers to develop their curriculum expertise. However, in some subjects, such as history, leaders are not as far along with their curriculum design. The curriculum matches the subject content of the national curriculum, but it does not map historical concepts such as cause and consequence. This means that pupils do not make connections across the historical periods studied.

Leaders have prioritised the teaching of phonics and reading. Staff have been trained and deliver the phonics programme well. Therefore, there is a consistent approach to the teaching of phonics that starts in early years. Pupils know that they can read a word by using their phonic knowledge. Leaders' programme for assessing pupils' comprehension skills is well organised. It is enabling pupils to understand what they read. Pupils are provided with a range of high-quality books, which they say they enjoy. Pupils read from books well matched to their phonic knowledge and reading age. Almost all pupils become fluent, confident readers by the end of key stage 1. However, some pupils are given a mix of decodable and non-decodable books, which is preventing some pupils from becoming fluent readers without intervention from adults.

There is a clear identification process for pupils with additional needs that is informed by assessment and parents' input. The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) works effectively with outside agencies to ensure that pupils' needs are clearly identified and assessed so that the right support can be put in place in school. Staff receive training on a wide range of specific learning difficulties, so they know how to help pupils to succeed. Pupils have clear plans and targets for their next steps in learning. Leaders review these targets regularly to check how well pupils are doing. Assessment informs targets that are well matched to the areas of need for each pupil.

The core Christian values of love, friendship, forgiveness, honesty, hope and trust are appreciated by parents and drive the ethos of the school. The curriculum for personal, social, health and economic education contributes well to pupils' personal development. It is designed to develop resilience, empathy and self-awareness through activities based on teamwork. Clubs for activities such as multi-skills and gymnastics enable pupils to develop their talents and interests. Pupils know how to eat healthily and how to keep mentally and physically healthy. The religious education team teaches pupils about democracy through activities such as choosing a charity to support. However, pupils do not have a secure understanding that some groups of people may be treated unfairly. Leaders know that pupils must learn more about the importance of respecting difference, including different beliefs and lifestyles.

Leaders have worked hard to limit the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. The curriculum for remote learning helped teachers to quickly address the gaps in pupils' knowledge and skills when pupils returned to school. Some members of staff have joined the school recently and have settled well. Staff say that leaders are considerate of their workload and well-being.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

All staff are well trained in keeping children safe. They receive regular updates to keep this important area a high priority in the school. Staff understand that everyone is responsible for ensuring that pupils are kept safe. They can identify changes in pupils' behaviour that may indicate that a pupil needs help. Staff know how to record and report concerns about pupils. When there are concerns, leaders take the right steps to involve other agencies so that children receive the help that they need.

Leaders ensure that appropriate safety checks are carried out on adults visiting or working at the school.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Pupils are provided with a mix of decodable and non-decodable books for reading. This makes it difficult for pupils to practise and remember the sounds they have learned when they are reading. This means that not all pupils are gaining fluency and confidence in their reading as quickly as they could. Leaders should ensure that staff provide pupils only with reading books that are decodable.
- Leaders have not completed their curriculum design in some subjects. In these subjects, leaders have not identified the subject-specific concepts that pupils need to learn or how new ideas build on previous learning. This prevents pupils from making links and building on what they already know to develop their understanding. Leaders need to identify the key concepts and essential knowledge that will help pupils remember long term what they have been taught, and how this connects with what they can recall.
- Pupils have limited opportunities to learn about the diverse cultures of British society. This means that pupils are not as knowledgeable about different faiths, cultures and beliefs, or about how some groups of people may suffer discrimination. Leaders should make sure that they promote increased, age-appropriate opportunities within the curriculum, so that pupils learn about the equality of different cultures and faiths in order to prepare them for life in modern Britain.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good or outstanding school, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the section 8 inspection a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the second section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good in March 2012.

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.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

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	122283
Local authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	10211308
Type of school	First school
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3 to 9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	88
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Paul Truscott
Headteacher	Nichola Brannen (Executive Headteacher)
Website	www.longhorsley-st-helens.northumberland.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	31 January 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Longhorsley St Helen’s Church of England Primary School is a voluntary-aided school. It is part of the Diocese of Newcastle.
- The school is part of a federation with Whalton Church of England Aided Primary School, which is about 12 miles away.
- The school is not currently using any alternative provision.
- The school’s most recent Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools under section 48 took place in May 2017, when the school was graded good.

Information about this inspection

This was the first routine inspection the school had 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 held meetings with the executive headteacher, the assistant headteacher (who is also the SENCo) and curriculum leaders. The lead inspector met with five members of the governing body, including the chair and vice-chair. A telephone

conversation was held with a representative from the local authority and with a representative from the Diocese of Newcastle.

- Inspectors carried out deep dives in phonics and reading, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, inspectors met subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Provision for pupils with SEND was observed with leaders.
- The school's single central record was scrutinised. A meeting was held with the executive headteacher and assistant headteacher to discuss the school's safeguarding arrangements. Inspectors asked staff and governors about their safeguarding training and safeguarding procedures in school.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils from all year groups about their learning and observed them during social times.
- There were no responses to Ofsted's pupil survey, but inspectors gathered their views about being a pupil at the school formally and informally. Inspectors considered eight responses to Ofsted's staff survey and 26 responses to Ofsted's Parent View, including free-text comments.

Inspection team

Kathryn McDonald, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Zoe Carr

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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