

Porthleven School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111985
Local Authority	Cornwall
Inspection number	357021
Inspection dates	2–3 March 2011
Reporting inspector	Alexander Baxter

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	278
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Zoe Willey
Headteacher	Duncan Ratcliffe
Date of previous school inspection	5 June 2008
School address	Torleven Road Porthleven Porthleven TR13 9BX
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 29 lessons and observed 14 teachers. They observed the school's work, and attended two whole-school assemblies. Inspectors evaluated break times, before- and after-school activities, and held meetings with representatives of the governing body, staff, pupils, and parents and carers. They looked at plans and policies, records of assessments and the tracking of pupils' progress. The provision and planning for pupils who are potentially vulnerable or have special educational needs and/or disabilities were evaluated across the school. In addition, questionnaires completed by 129 parents and carers, 101 pupils and 20 staff were analysed.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The consistency of teaching and learning across the school, especially in Years 3 to 6, in writing and by more-able pupils.
- The degree to which the school curriculum develops the pupils' basic skills.
- How well school leaders seek to bring about and sustain continuous improvements in provision and pupils' attendance, numeracy and reading skills.

Information about the school

This is an above average-sized primary school. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The large majority of pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average. The proportion of pupils joining the school other than at the usual times is above average. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught within Nursery and Reception classes. A privately run breakfast club shares some of the school's facilities, and a local authority children's centre and privately run nursery operate adjacent to the school site; these were not within the remit of this inspection.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

- Porthleven School is an inclusive school which provides a satisfactory quality of education. Attainment is broadly average showing that pupils across the range of needs and abilities achieve satisfactorily. All the staff sustain good care, guidance and support enabling pupils to feel and be safe. The good level of care is reflected in the pupils' much improved and now average attendance, their good enjoyment of school and the school's effective partnership with parents and carers.
- Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall and as a result pupils make satisfactory progress. While instability in staffing continues to inhibit the efforts of leaders and managers to secure good teaching across the school, there is evidence of improvement.
- Purposeful action by the headteacher and senior colleagues has established good provision, including teaching and learning, in the Nursery, Years 1 and 2, and in Year 6. The now evident good practice in teaching and learning is not, however, sufficiently widely shared. Current efforts to tackle gaps in pupils' previous learning, including good quality intervention and support both in and out of classes, are bringing further improvement. This is seen most notably, for example, in pupils' better writing and the increasing number of pupils making good progress.
- In recent terms, the headteacher and senior teachers, with sound support from the governing body, have improved the way pupils' learning needs and progress are targeted. Subject leaders now have a better view of what needs to be done to address previous underachievement. As a result, self-evaluation is satisfactory with appropriate priorities identified, which together with the improvements mentioned earlier show a satisfactory capacity for continued improvement. However, the monitoring of teaching and learning does not always provide a sharp enough focus on the quality of pupils' learning.
- Teachers' expectations of what pupils should achieve and pupils' own aspirations are not consistently high enough in Reception and across Years 3 to 5, however, and as a result, teaching and learning are satisfactory through these classes. There are also inconsistencies in these classes in the way pupils' behaviour is managed, how well pupils' independence as learners is promoted and how reading and numeracy skills are developed. As a result, some pupils are not able to work independently or interpret words and apply basic numeracy skills well enough.
- Pupils benefit from a good range of learning activities both in and out of school. As a result, pupils develop good information and communication technology (ICT) skills, adopt healthy lifestyles and mix well with others in their community.

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Up to 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- By January 2012, secure more consistently good progress by pupils through Years 3 to 5 and raise their attainment, especially in reading and mathematics, by:
 - improving the strategies used to develop the pupils' reading and basic number skills, the latter particularly through real-life, practical problem-solving activity
 - raising the level of challenge presented to pupils, including during the daily mental mathematics and group reading sessions.
- By the end of the present academic year, ensure that the large majority of teaching and learning across Years 3 to 5 is consistently good or better by rigorous monitoring to embed good practice, including:
 - monitoring lessons and pupils' achievements more effectively to ensure that pupils build on previous skills and become capable, independent learners
 - sharing the good practice evident in some parts of the school, especially in engaging pupils in learning and in managing their behaviour.
- By the end of the next two terms improve the quality of children's learning in Reception and build on the good start children make in the Nursery by ensuring that all the activities on offer are closely matched to children's individual learning needs and are supported more effectively by adult questioning and well-established routines and high expectations.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Observations of lessons show that in response to strengthening, but still patchy teaching and learning, pupils' attainment is broadly average and learning and progress are satisfactory overall. These outcomes show that from normally expected skills on entry teachers are securing pupils' satisfactory achievement. Achievement is satisfactory for all groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, pupils arriving from other schools and those with more ability. Observations of teaching and learning and of children's work show good progress in the Nursery and satisfactory progress in Reception classes. Inspection also shows that pupils' attainment is rising in key parts of the school, particularly at the end of Year 2 and Year 6; as seen, for example, in Year 6 where currently a more-able group of pupils are on course to attain above-average levels of attainment in response to challenging teaching, which is extending their independent learning skills. However, this is not yet the norm and attainment is broadly average in English, mathematics and science, as seen over time in national tests at the end of Year 6, and in pupils' recorded work and responses in the lessons observed through other year groups across the school.

Good learning in the Nursery and in Years 1 and 2 and Year 6 classes is typified by an effective emphasis on pupils enjoying learning; working independently or in groups to solve problems or learning first hand by using practical equipment. These features are less evident in Reception and Years 3 to 5 classes, where learning is subsequently less consistent. As a result, some pupils lack confidence as independent learners, particularly in

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reading and mathematics because their basic numeracy skills and understanding of words are not fully developed. However, some good learning occurs, for example in a Years 3 and 4 literacy session, when particularly challenging questioning by the teacher extended pupils' interest and understanding.

Pupils do their best to get along together, but behaviour slips on occasion, especially in lessons which fail to engage pupils' interest or when teaching lacks high expectations. In contrast pupils' behaviour is mostly good out of lessons where there is practical activity. Pupils say that they feel safe and that, 'There is always someone to help us.' Pupils enjoy sports and adopt healthy living well. They contribute satisfactorily to school life and take their responsibilities seriously, for example, on the school council or managing equipment during assemblies. The pupils' satisfactory spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, while improving, is constrained in some classes by inconsistent behaviour and by reduced emphasis on thoughtful, independent learning. Attendance is broadly average, with very little persistent absence. This reflects not only pupils' enjoyment of school, but the robust approach of the school in working with parents and carers to secure regular attendance. This, together with the satisfactory development of a wide range of skills, contributes to the sound development of the skills pupils will need in later life.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	3
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

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How effective is the provision?

Good features in most classes include warm relationships between adults and pupils and good use of computers, including audio-visual interactive whiteboards; these extend literacy and information, communication and technology (ICT) skills, enrich learning across the range of subjects and promote pupils' enjoyment. However, the quality of teaching and learning is currently patchy across the school. Consistently good teaching is evident in Nursery, the combined Years 1 and 2 classes and in Year 6. Most of the good teaching and support observed inside and outside of classrooms resulted from the close match of learning activities to pupils' needs and abilities, which sustained their full engagement and interest. This was seen, for example, in a Years 1 and 2 science lesson, where pupils were engrossed in their practical investigations. Pupils were similarly engaged and stimulated by the teacher's high expectations and challenging questioning during a mathematics lesson in Years 6. Although equally successful on occasion, teaching and learning are less effective through Years 3 to 5. Weaknesses in managing behaviour, encouraging independent learning and low expectations, particularly during group reading and mental mathematics sessions, slow pupils' progress. There is also inconsistency in the use of assessment to plan relevant next steps in learning in these year groups.

The school provides a stimulating curriculum that contributes particularly well to pupils' enjoyment and healthy living, with out-of-class activities, such as the 'Funfit Sessions', matched very supportively to the pupils' needs. Effective links are increasingly made between subjects to make learning more interesting and purposeful, with topics such as 'The Great Fire of London' capturing pupils' imagination well. The provision for ICT provides good opportunities for pupils to draw on their ICT skills to support learning in different subjects, for example by compiling a video of the planets. The displays and work seen show that pupils readily extend their literacy skills when pursuing different topics, for example when writing about 'Light and Life'. However, there are fewer opportunities for pupils to extend their numeracy skills across different subjects. An extensive range of extra-curricular activities, including visits and visitors such as local artists, provide enriching first-hand learning experiences.

Pupils are well known by staff, who provide good pastoral care, respond quickly to any concerns and ensure their safety and well-being. The school goes out of its way to support potentially vulnerable pupils, including them in all aspects of school life and seeking support from outside specialists as necessary. Good support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including from teaching assistants, extends beyond the classrooms and is particularly effective in the 'Learning Zone'. The school has worked to good effect in recent terms to tackle persistent absence and by developing close links with families has significantly improved the rate of attendance. Although there are good arrangements for pupils entering the school and on transfer to secondary school, partnerships with the adjacent children's centre and privately run nursery are not well established.

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These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

Carefully considered team leadership by the headteacher has strengthened self-evaluation, which is now satisfactory. Together, senior leaders are now driving the school forward at a steady pace to secure satisfactory value for money. Good links with parents and carers are also helping to promote good attendance and the pupils' enjoyment of school. Subject leaders, some relatively new to their role, play a suitable part in evaluating pupils' progress and teachers' planning and identifying priorities for improvement. Initiatives are having a good effect in strengthening the curriculum, for example in science, but, except in writing, have not been applied rigorously enough to establish consistently good teaching. The governing body is conscientious in fulfilling its statutory responsibilities to ensure the safety of the pupils, for example by ensuring that all the required risk assessments and checks of staff are completed. In addition, its regular review of policies is driving improvement, for example in pupils' attendance. However, the role of the governing body in developing teaching and learning is less well established, with the monitoring of teaching and learning by senior leaders not always providing sufficient emphasis on the quality of learning.

The school promotes equality of opportunity satisfactorily and its inclusive ethos confronts discrimination effectively. The school's success in strengthening provision in the combined Years 1 and 2 classes shows its determination to re-establish equally good provision for all pupils. The school promotes community cohesion satisfactorily, especially through topics which link subjects and through community events and charitable donations. However, the school accepts that the focus on national aspects and the wider world is not as strong.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Although all children have access to a well-resourced learning environment, teaching is consistently more effective in the Nursery than in Reception classes. Children receive a warm welcome into the Nursery and make a good start to their schooling. From the outset and through Nursery and Reception classes, the Early Years Foundation Stage leader and her staff establish good links with parents and safeguard the children's welfare effectively. However, they have yet to secure consistently good practice throughout the Early Years Foundation Stage. All staff set clear expectations and present consistent role models of considerate behaviour to make sure that children feel safe and relate positively towards each other. Progress is satisfactory overall, but mixed. Children settle well in the Nursery and quickly develop self-confidence and social awareness and, in response to consistently good teaching, make good progress. The children's singing of the 'Hello Song' and counting practice during registration time, for example, reflects the happy productive learning in this class. The quality of teaching varies across the Reception classes and is satisfactory. While assessment, in the form of Learning Journeys, is used effectively in Reception to record children's progress, it is not yet used well enough in planning ahead to build on previous learning. As a result, adults miss opportunities to extend children's learning by tailoring activities and questioning children more closely to meet their needs and interests. This means that children do not develop their skills quickly enough, particularly when choosing learning activities for themselves to develop their independence. However, good learning was seen, for example, when children, supported and questioned well by a parent and teaching assistant, developed a clear understanding of the need to wash hands before handling food.

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These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

Views of parents and carers

There was a broadly-average response rate to the questionnaire by parents and carers. Most of the parents and carers are happy with the school, a typical comment being, 'This is a very welcoming school'. The large majority of the responses to the Ofsted questionnaire were positive, with almost all parents and carers agreeing that the school keeps children safe and that children enjoy school. A few parents and carers were interviewed informally in the playground and most also expressed positive support of the school. A small minority expressed disagreement with some statements in the questionnaire mostly about how the school deals with unacceptable behaviour. Inspectors considered the parents' views and agree that at times pupils' behaviour should be managed better in lessons.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Porthleven School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school. In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 129 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 278 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	84	65	44	34	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	89	69	34	26	2	2	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	77	60	44	34	6	5	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	77	60	45	35	4	3	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	87	67	40	31	1	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	80	62	45	35	3	2	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	58	45	66	51	2	2	2	2
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	76	59	44	34	1	1	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	75	58	49	38	4	3	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	56	43	58	45	12	9	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	60	47	56	43	3	2	2	2
The school is led and managed effectively	73	57	51	40	2	2	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	89	69	37	29	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



3 March 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Porthleven School, Porthleven TR13 9BX

Thank you for welcoming us to your school, and special thanks to those of you who took the time to talk to us. We were pleased to hear that you enjoy school and we agree that you do best when the teachers challenge you and plan interesting, practical activities for you. You enjoy friendly relationships with each other and we think that the staff care for you well and help you to keep healthy and safe. We think that your school is a satisfactory school that is beginning to improve more quickly.

These are the other main things we found.

- Most of you achieve satisfactorily by the time you leave the school.
- Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, but there is some good teaching across the school.
- You attend regularly and participate well in a good range of school clubs.
- Your headteacher is working hard to help staff and governors improve the way they work together so that you can do even better.

To help you make better progress in your work, we have asked your headteacher, governors and teachers to do three main things.

- Improve your progress, especially in reading and mathematics, particularly by making sure that you learn your number facts and improve your understanding of words.
- Make sure that teaching in Years 3 to 5 is more consistent in challenging you and helping you to become independent learners.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning in Reception classes by making sure that all of your activities and the support you receive from adults meet your individual learning needs.

You can all help by making sure that you work hard, take more responsibility for your learning and seek adult help if you are not sure how to improve your work.

Yours sincerely

Alex Baxter

Lead inspector

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