

Pennycross Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113297
Local Authority	Plymouth
Inspection number	357311
Inspection dates	30–31 March 2011
Reporting inspector	Laurie Lewin

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	221
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Carol Noden
Headteacher	Carole Roskell
Date of previous school inspection	10 December 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Twenty lessons were observed and nine teachers were seen. The inspectors met with pupils, staff, parents and carers, and members of the governing body. The inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at school documentation including teachers' planning, assessment information, safeguarding policies and scrutinised samples of pupils' work. The inspectors analysed 41 questionnaires from parents and carers, 15 from staff and 100 from pupils.

The inspectors reviewed many aspects of the school's work and looked in detail at the following.

- How well do pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and more-able pupils progress as they move through the school?
- What is the impact of the school's initiatives to improve the quality of teaching?
- What is the impact of initiatives to improve the quality of provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?
- What does the school's assessment data show about the progress of pupils in the current academic year?

Information about the school

The school is average in size. It serves the local area, with some pupils coming from further afield. The overall proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average when compared to other schools, and many of the individuals concerned have speech and language difficulties. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above the national average. Nearly all of the pupils are of White British heritage, with a very small number coming from other ethnic heritages. The school is accredited with several awards including the Healthy Schools Plus Award and The International Schools Award. The school runs a breakfast club each morning before the start of the school day. The current headteacher took up her post at the school in September 2009.

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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a good school. It has improved significantly in recent times.

Children get off to a sound start in the Early Years Foundation Stage, with satisfactory teaching that ensures they make satisfactory progress. The provision for looking after the children is good and they behave well. However, planning for sessions does not always match activities precisely enough to the needs and abilities of the children. Occasionally, this results in children not progressing as rapidly as they should do. Good teaching across the rest of the school ensures pupils make good progress. Teachers and teaching assistants have good relationships with all pupils and use these well to encourage, guide and support individuals. They plan interesting lessons that cater well for the needs and interests of pupils of different abilities. Pupils appreciate this and those spoken to typically made comments such as, 'Adults are always helpful and kind' ♦ teachers make lessons interesting and fun.' Older pupils mention that behaviour has improved a lot. The good behaviour means pupils concentrate well and have positive and enthusiastic attitudes to learning. While pupils reach broadly average levels of attainment by the end of Year 6, occasionally, they struggle to articulate their ideas and this slows the pace of their learning. Occasionally, teachers miss opportunities to broaden and extend pupils' language skills. Within the curriculum provision, the school provides lots of enrichment for pupils' learning through a good range of trips, visitors and extra-curricular activities.

All groups of pupils are well supported, cared for and guided, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Staff are vigilant in all areas concerning the safeguarding of pupils. Pupils feel safe and are confident to ask adults for help. They respond positively to the clear targets set to help them improve their work. Pupils do much to contribute to the immediate and local community. Through their frequent involvement in charity fund-raising and activities such as taking harvest parcels to the homes of senior citizens, pupils gain a sensitive awareness and appreciation of the world around them. The school's good emphasis on health education and its drive towards gaining the Healthy Schools Plus Award ensure that pupils gain a good understanding about how to keep themselves fit and healthy. Pupils have a clear awareness of right and wrong and a good sense of social awareness.

In just over a year in post, the headteacher has created an atmosphere in which all staff are committed towards helping the school improve rapidly. The governing body has been particularly effective in supporting the headteacher in recruiting new staff and ensuring the establishment of a strong staff team. The headteacher works closely with staff to ensure that ambitious targets are set for what the pupils should achieve. Senior staff work well alongside the headteacher and together, they have helped staff establish robust assessment procedures to check pupils' progress. As a result, staff have a clear overview of pupils' performance and are alert to spotting any individual who may be falling behind

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and putting appropriate support in place. Rigorous and accurate self-evaluation means that all staff and the governing body have a clear view of the school's main strengths and weaknesses. The governing body involves itself strongly in all aspects of the school's work. Actions for strategic development are prioritised well and are clearly identified in the school development plan. The strong commitment of the staff and the good rate of improvement since the last inspection mean that the school has a good capacity to keep improving.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the provision for the Early Years Foundation Stage so that it is of good quality by July 2012 by ensuring that:
 - full use is made of assessment information to inform lesson planning
 - lesson plans clearly show how activities will be precisely matched to the needs of children of different levels of ability
 - all opportunities are fully utilised to promote children's speaking skills.
- Improve pupils' abilities in the use of spoken language by ensuring that by July 2012:
 - staff receive training to upgrade their skills in promoting pupils' language skills
 - lesson planning is developed to ensure that teachers always make full use of opportunities to extend pupils' abilities to articulate their ideas.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

Children attain below the expected levels when they start school. After making satisfactory progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage, in Years 1 to 6 all groups of pupils, including the more able and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, make good progress. Pupils work well to develop satisfactory basic skills to help them progress in the future. For example, in a good Year 6 lesson, pupils learned to use a range of different methods to carry out mental and oral calculation work and notably grew in confidence as the practice progressed. Similarly, in a good Year 2 lesson, pupils gained a solid understanding of how to gain the main ideas from researching text and putting information together themselves based on the text studied.

Over the last year especially, teachers have done a good job of boosting pupils' basic skills so that particular improvements have been made in helping all individuals progress at a faster rate in their reading, writing and mathematics. Evidence from pupils' books shows that they have covered a good range of work across the year and most present their work neatly. However, pupils' work with speaking and expressing themselves clearly was occasionally noted to be weak in lessons seen. On these occasions, pupils' responses to teachers' questions were often very short and they used a very limited range of vocabulary. This occasionally slowed down the pupils' ability to formulate clear ideas for the written tasks that followed. Almost all pupils concentrate hard and try their best in lessons. Pupils take pride in their work. They respond well and are motivated by the awards for their good work and efforts during assembly. They enjoy all aspects of their work at school. Pupils carry out their responsibilities such as being peer mediators and prefects conscientiously. They gain a good knowledge of people from cultures different to

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their own through their detailed studies. This is also enhanced further by the drive towards achieving the International Award, as a part of which the school has developed links with other schools in Ghana and Sweden.

The attendance of pupils is satisfactory. It has improved significantly this year due to the school's rigorous approach and follow-up.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
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	2

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

How effective is the provision?

Teachers make good use of information from assessing pupils' progress to plan lessons in which activities match pupils' needs precisely. As a result, pupils of all ability groups are usually challenged well by the work provided. Teaching assistants work well to support teachers and pupils. Good-quality training has helped them become skilled at supporting pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Teachers show good subject knowledge so that explanations and questions are always clear. They usually include a good variety of strategies and use a good range of resources to enliven work. In an outstanding Year 5 lesson, the excellent use of video clips provided good motivation to help pupils write creatively. In some lessons seen, teachers worked well to encourage pupils to build up their language skills. However, this good practice is not consistently the case and occasionally chances are missed to extend pupils' speaking skills. Also, very occasionally, the pace of work slows in lessons where chances for pupils to work on activities specifically geared to their ability levels are restricted because too long is spent

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on whole-class discussions. The curriculum is designed well to incorporate a good range of practical activities to broaden pupils' understanding and enable them to 'learn by doing'. Personal, social and health education work is well established and provides strong support for pupils' personal development. Activities planned with partner organisations such as The Plymouth Multicultural Centre, the good use of sports coaches and trips such as the residential visit to a farm are examples of the wide range of experiences staff plan to make learning interesting and enjoyable for pupils. The school's breakfast club is well run and ensures that the pupils who attend get their school day off to a good start.

Staff provide good pastoral support for pupils. There are many examples of pupils being helped to overcome difficult social and emotional needs to ensure they become happy and confident class members who successfully keep their learning on track. The consistent approach of staff towards promoting pupils' good behaviour has played a strong part in ensuring that lessons run smoothly and provide an atmosphere in which pupils feel encouraged to work hard and do their best.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
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?

The headteacher rigorously monitors the quality of lessons across the school and has made good use of the information gained to let teachers know how to improve their work. Over the last year, she has enabled subject leaders to develop their skills well in managing the subjects for which they are responsible. They play a full part in the school's self-evaluation and the development of actions within the school development plan. However, their role in monitoring and evaluating lessons is underdeveloped so that their overview of teaching and pupils' progress is not as comprehensive as it should be.

The school works well to promote good relationships with parents and carers. Their views are fully surveyed and acted on where appropriate, and they are kept regularly informed about the progress of their children. Strong liaison is established to advise parents and carers, and to constantly promote their involvement in supporting their children's learning.

The governing body works well to support the headteacher and staff, and is good at holding them to account through checking that new initiatives have the necessary impact. Safeguarding processes are well embedded within the curriculum so that pupils gain a good understanding about how to keep themselves safe. Good emphasis is laid on ensuring that all policies, such as those to do with child protection, are up to date and fully implemented. Procedures for assessing risks are strong, with follow-up actions applied quickly where necessary. The governing body and staff work well together to

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ensure that a full range of opportunities is provided to promote the achievement of all individuals and that no discrimination occurs.

The school has good links with other schools and partner organisations, and uses these well to boost pupils' learning. While the school implements a useful range of activities to promote community cohesion and has established some good links in the locality and further afield, its provision in this area is only satisfactory because plans are not sufficiently detailed to show how it will move forward with this work in the future.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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

Early Years Foundation Stage

Good induction processes ensure that children settle into school quickly. Although they receive satisfactory teaching and make satisfactory progress, their attainment remains below the expected levels when they start Year 1.

The provision for this part of the school has been substantially reorganised over the last year, to bring about improvements. In particular, staff have improved the curriculum to ensure that children are provided with a wide range of interesting activities and chances to explore and investigate. As a result, children are happy learners who behave well and make good gains in their personal development. Teachers and teaching assistants provide good care, guidance and support for children so that all individuals feel safe and develop as confident and enthusiastic learners. For example, when finishing one set of activities, children were seen to be very sensible in moving quickly to work with adults on a new task. Activities planned for children are interesting. However, the planning does not always clearly indicate how activities are designed to match the needs of children of different ability levels and does not always provide enough focus on developing children's ability with speaking. As a result, occasionally, children do not progress as rapidly as they should. Teachers and teaching assistants regularly make observations about how well the children

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progress in activities, but the information they gain is not used sufficiently well to inform future planning.

The provision is led and managed satisfactorily with accurate self-evaluation and clear initiatives planned to show how staff will improve provision. These planned initiatives have been implemented very recently and have not had sufficient time to impact on improving children's attainment and progress. Staff show good levels of commitment and enthusiasm to keep all processes for improvement moving forward.

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 low return of questionnaires. Most parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire indicated that they are pleased with the school's work. Nearly all of them support the view that their children are happy and safe at school.

A small minority of parents who responded to the questionnaire did not agree that the school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour or that the school takes sufficient account of their views. Inspection evidence revealed that, while occasional behavioural incidents occur at lunchtimes or break-times, these occurrences have decreased significantly in recent times as a result of school measures. In addition, the governing body has recently run a full-scale survey to gain the views of parents and carers, and has responded, where appropriate, to the views expressed.

A very small minority of parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire did not agree that the school is well led and managed or that their children are making enough progress. Inspectors judged that good work by leaders and managers in the school has resulted in a good pace of improvement that is set to continue in the future. The school has made significant progress in terms of improving pupils' achievement and in matching the curriculum provision to the needs and interests of all groups of pupils.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Pennycross Primary 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 41 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 221 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	18	44	21	54	2	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	20	49	20	49	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	17	41	20	49	4	10	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	13	32	21	51	2	5	4	10
The teaching is good at this school	15	37	21	51	3	7	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	9	22	28	68	3	7	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	10	24	27	66	3	7	0	0
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)	7	17	24	59	3	7	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	14	34	18	44	6	15	1	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	9	22	18	44	10	24	2	5
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	8	20	23	56	9	22	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	12	29	20	49	5	12	1	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	17	41	19	46	4	10	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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	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.



1 April 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Penncross Primary School, Plymouth PL2 3RL

Thank you for making us feel welcome at your school. We have judged that yours is a good school. Through discussions we had with you and the survey that some of you completed, we know that there are many things that you like about your school.

Here are some of the good things that we found in your school.

- We can see that you enjoy school and the good curriculum makes sure you get lots of interesting activities to take part in.
- You are very fit and healthy, and know a lot about how to stay this way.
- Good teaching helps you to make good progress and your teachers work hard to make your lessons interesting and fun.
- Your behaviour is good. You are thoughtful and carry out responsibilities well.
- You all have a good understanding about how to stay safe. The adults in the school do a good job of taking care of you.
- The headteacher, staff and the governing body have done a good job to help improve the school and they work hard to make sure it keeps improving.

This is what we have asked the school to do now.

- Make sure that teachers plan activities for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage that are just at the right level; not too easy and not too difficult.
- Ensure that in lessons across the school, wherever possible, you are always given enough opportunities to describe your ideas and talk about your learning.

All of you can play an important part in helping the school to improve by continuing to work hard in all lessons.

Yours sincerely

Laurie Lewin

Lead inspector

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