

Alverton Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111806
Local Authority	Cornwall
Inspection number	356983
Inspection dates	8–9 June 2011
Reporting inspector	Ian Hancock HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 under pilot arrangements; it was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	312
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Reynolds
Headteacher	Stuart Hood
Date of previous school inspection	6–7 May 2008
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Introduction

This pilot inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors. The inspectors observed nine teachers and visited 17 lessons. They observed the teaching of letter sounds and reading, and heard a small sample of pupils read in Year 1. The inspectors looked at a wide range of documentation, including the school's analysis of pupils' attainment and the progress they make, data on attendance, plans for improvement and policies such as the one on safeguarding. They held discussions with staff, parents, carers, representatives of the governing body and groups of pupils. The inspectors analysed 73 questionnaires completed by parents and carers, as well as 100 questionnaires from pupils and 19 from staff.

Information about the school

Alverton Community Primary School is larger than the average-sized primary school. The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage and very few pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils that are known to be eligible for free school meals is similar to that in other schools. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is average, but a higher than average ratio has a statement of special educational needs. The Early Years Foundation Stage consists of a Nursery class and two Reception classes. There is a privately run nursery onsite which was not visited during this inspection.

There have been some changes in the leadership of the school since the last inspection. The previous headteacher retired in July 2010 and the school was led by the deputy headteacher for the subsequent autumn term. The new headteacher took up his post in January 2011.

The school's work since the last inspection has been recognised by the Artsmark Gold award, the Promoting Active Democracy Loudly Gold award and the Healthy Schools Plus award. The school has exceeded all government floor targets during the past three years.

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	2
Achievement	2
Teaching	2
Leadership and management	2
Behaviour and safety	2
Does the school adequately promote the pupils' well-being?	Yes
Does the school adequately promote community cohesion?	Yes
Does the school provide value for money?	Yes

Key findings

- This is a good school which has made many improvements in recent years despite substantial changes in leadership. The school has managed these changes well and has maintained its focus on improving pupil's achievement. Achievement has risen steadily and attainment is consistently in line with the national average. While pupils achieve well, their achievement in writing is not as strong as in reading and mathematics. This is largely because recent strategies to improve writing are not sufficiently established across the school.
- Most pupils, including those in the Early Years Foundation Stage, make good progress in lessons and over time. This is because of the engaging curriculum and the good teaching they receive. Lessons are generally characterised by high expectations and challenging tasks that interest and motivate pupils. In some lessons, pupils make less progress because adults do not seize every opportunity to teach early literacy skills, or consistently use guidance to support pupils in improving their work.
- Pupils make a significant contribution to the life of the school through a wide range of roles. These experiences develop pupils' independence and provide them with valuable life skills. Pupils' social skills and their understanding of what is required are good because of the well-established opportunities for them to discuss their work and be actively involved in evaluating their learning.
- Pupils feel very safe in school and the vast majority of them behave well. There are occasions when the behaviour of a small number of pupils falls below expected levels. These incidents are managed well and the school makes good provision to meet the needs of such individuals.

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- The new headteacher and his team have industriously pursued actions to improve teaching and raise attainment. They have largely tackled the most important weakness regarding boys' achievement in writing. While the quality of teaching has improved, some variability remains. Good use is made of pupil tracking information. Nevertheless, the current systems do not provide easy access to some key information.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of pupils who make good or better progress, particularly in writing, by July 2012, by:
 - ensuring adults use every opportunity to promote the application of early reading and writing skills
 - making greater use of statements of success so that all pupils understand the small steps they need to take to improve their work
 - ensuring that leaders and managers have sufficient understanding and easy access to key information to sustain ambition and accelerate progress.
- Reduce the variability in teaching so that it is consistently good in every lesson by:
 - using a greater range of questions to check pupils' understanding and adapt their work
 - ensuring a better balance between direct teaching and pupils' discussion and activity
 - making clear the expectations of individuals and groups so that they know what they are expected to achieve in each part of the lesson
 - developing a broader range of approaches to ensure that learning activities are consistently matched to individual needs.

Main report

Following a period of turbulence in the leadership of the school, the new headteacher has brought stability and enabled leaders and managers at all levels to play a greater role in implementing new ways of working. These account for the steady improvements which have been made in the quality of teaching and learning.

In lessons, pupils enjoy learning because of the high quality relationships with their teacher and clear academic guidance which builds their confidence and ensures they understand what is required. A notable example was seen in a Year 6 literacy lesson, where pupils enthusiastically used success statements to evaluate a partner's writing and suggested improvements. In this lesson, pupils demonstrated a well-developed knowledge of their learning targets. The school recognises that this is not always the case and plans to make greater use of these statements to accelerate progress and deepen pupils' understanding of how to improve their work.

Children's levels of development when they join the school are generally below, and at times well below, those expected for their age. Children settle quickly and make

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good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage because assessment information is used well to ensure that activities are carefully matched to individuals' needs. The focused teaching of early literacy has made a noticeable difference so that most pupils reach the levels expected for their age in reading by the age of six. In some lessons, adults miss opportunities to reinforce these important skills.

Older pupils also make good progress across the school so that when they leave school, their attainment is average. The rising trend of attainment and pupils' good progress demonstrate that they achieve well. The school's concerted efforts to improve boys' writing through drama and story-telling have made a marked difference. Attainment in writing has risen and the gap between boys and girls has closed substantially. Nevertheless, pupils' achievement in writing remains weaker than in reading and mathematics because some initiatives are in the early stages of implementation.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities achieve well because of the skilled and sensitive support they receive in lessons and in small groups. The school's strong commitment to equal opportunities is evident in the similar achievements of other pupil groups, such as those who are known to be eligible for free school meals.

The behaviour of the vast majority of pupils is good. They are polite, respectful and demonstrate a caring attitude towards each other. Pupils report that behaviour has improved as a result of the recent introduction of a 'sanctions ladder'. Incidents of bullying are said to be rare and pupils value the role played by the 'bully busters' in listening to their worries and passing them on to staff. A few parents and carers who responded to the Ofsted questionnaire expressed concern regarding behaviour and bullying. While incidents of poorer behaviour occur, staff work effectively with a range of specialist agencies to provide additional support. Consequently, pupils with specific behaviour needs show good, and in some cases outstanding, improvements in their behaviour over time.

Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage show an awareness of personal safety when using toys, but less so when designing larger constructions. Older pupils know how to keep themselves safe and report they feel safer in the school because of the recent improvements in site safety. They are confident in sharing concerns with adults as well as other pupils. The highly effective care of pupils whose circumstances may make them vulnerable keeps them especially safe, while aiding their good progress and good, or improving, attendance. The school has robust arrangements for keeping children safe. Procedures meet current requirements and are supported well by regular training. At times, leaders are over-reliant on individuals for some aspects of health and safety, such as the completion of risk assessments.

Pupils achieve well because of the good, and at times outstanding, teaching they receive. The school has utilised the expertise of its own staff and external support to improve the quality of teaching. The investment in staff training can be seen in teachers' confidence in subject knowledge and their clear understanding of how

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lessons build on previous learning. Classrooms provide a stimulating environment where learning is well supported by attractive and informative displays. Teachers' comments in books are linked to pupils' learning targets and provide clear steps for improvement.

In the Early Years Foundation Stage, children use story telling, singing and rhymes as a foundation for learning early reading and writing skills. This is supplemented by the systematic teaching of letter sounds that continues into Key Stage 1. High expectations and challenging tasks are common features of lessons across the school so that most pupils make good progress and benefit from regular opportunities to talk about their learning in paired and group discussions. In a small number of lessons, pupils do not make as much progress as they should. One reason is because the approaches used are not the best ones to meet pupils' learning needs, but there are other reasons. Questions are not always used effectively to deepen pupils' understanding. Pupils are not sufficiently active in the lessons or they are not clear about what they are expected to achieve in that part of the lesson.

The school has developed an engaging curriculum that makes a strong contribution to pupils' learning. Judicious use is made of established teaching programmes to improve literacy levels and increase pupils' understanding of other countries and cultures. A noticeable example was seen in a Year 2 literacy lesson based around an African story. In this lesson, pupils excitedly acted out the story in groups and empathised with the characters by linking actions to adjectives and adverbs. The lesson integrated practical and creative learning through music, dance and art in a highly effective way. Such lessons provide a memorable learning experience that brings stories to life. Reading is further promoted through imaginative events such as a 'Book Oscars' awards celebration.

While many leaders are new to their roles, they have been inducted well through regular training and external support to fully play their part in leading the necessary changes. One reason for this is that the school has retained a sharp focus on its key priorities, assisted by regular monitoring visits from the School Improvement Partner. While aspirations are high, the school recognises the need to increase its expectations of pupils' progress in order to achieve its ambitions. The increased contribution of other leaders and the track record of improvement demonstrate a good capacity to sustain the school's increasing success.

The governing body has also experienced a period of change, resulting in a number of governors being new or taking on new responsibilities. The governing body is knowledgeable and supportive of the school. Members of the governing body are growing increasingly confident in challenging the school and holding it to account. There are some very good examples of governors being actively involved in the monitoring of the school such as spending a day reviewing the difference made by actions taken to improve writing. Nevertheless, procedures to evaluate the working of some statutory policies are not sufficiently developed.

Procedures for monitoring and reviewing other aspects of the school's work are

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robust and lead to well-informed plans for improvement that effectively address the school's priorities.

Teachers make increasing use of assessment information and understand that they are accountable for pupils' progress. This is reflected well in the steady improvements made in the quality of teaching and learning. While systems to track the attainment and progress of pupils are detailed and well maintained, the current systems do not provide easy access to some key strategic information. As a result, leaders do not always have a clear overview of current rates of progress and the emerging picture of end-of-year attainment.

The very large majority of parents and carers who responded to the Ofsted questionnaire expressed positive views on all aspects of the school. These views are similar to those of the inspection team. A very small number of negative responses and comments were received. These were brought to the school's attention and, where appropriate, are commented on in this report.

The school's caring ethos makes a significant contribution to the strong sense of community. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage mix well and are able to resolve minor disagreements. Older pupils, including those with additional needs, develop valuable social skills through a range of responsible roles such as being members of the school's parliament or school council. Positive characteristics are subject to weekly discussion and reflection in lessons and assemblies which contribute to pupils' well-established sense of right and wrong. Pupils attending the nurture classes are also encouraged to reflect on their actions. There are regular opportunities for pupils to learn about the beliefs of others and how a person's faith may influence their everyday lives. For example, the recent royal wedding event led to pupils writing about the celebration, having a street party and experiencing a wedding ceremony in the local church. Pupils' understanding of other cultures is extensively promoted by learning about life in China and Ancient Egypt, reading authors from other countries and through links with schools in Peru, India and Kenya.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Alverton Community 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 73 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 312 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
Q1 My child is happy at school	46	63	24	33	3	4	0	0
Q2 My child feels safe at school	52	71	20	27	1	1	0	0
Q3 The school helps my child to achieve as well as they can	41	56	26	36	2	3	1	1
Q4 The school meets my child's particular needs	37	51	31	42	2	3	1	1
Q5 The school ensures my child is well looked after	48	66	24	33	0	0	0	0
Q6 Teaching at this school is good	45	62	24	33	3	4	0	0
Q7 There is a good standard of behaviour at this school	33	45	38	52	0	0	0	0
Q8 Lessons are not disrupted by bad behaviour	26	36	32	44	8	11	0	0
Q9 The school deals with any cases of bullying well	30	41	25	34	10	14	0	0
Q10 The school helps me to support my child's learning	33	45	30	41	5	7	0	0
Q11 The school responds to my concerns and keeps me well informed	32	44	32	44	6	8	0	0
Q12 The school is well led and managed	43	59	24	33	1	1	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	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

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 2010 to 31 December 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 2010/11 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 achievement of all pupils. ■ Behaviour and safety. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The effectiveness of leadership and management. <p>and taking into consideration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ how well the school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
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.



10 June 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Alverton Community Primary School, Penzance TR18 4QD

My colleagues and I thoroughly enjoyed meeting you when we came to inspect your school. Thank you for coming to talk to us and completing the questionnaire. We have listened to your views and read every response. I would like to share with you what we have learned about your school.

Alverton Community Primary is a good school and here are some of the best things about the school:

- Your headteacher, deputy headteacher and other staff have worked hard to improve the school so that more of you reach the expected levels.
- In lessons, you make good progress because the work challenges you and you know what you are learning.
- Learning is often fun and exciting, which enables you to produce your best work.
- You make a valuable contribution to the school community, for example as 'bully busters', parliament ministers or sitting on the school council.
- Adults take really good care of you.

We have asked your headteacher and teachers to help even more of you make good progress, particularly in writing. They will do this by ensuring you all have the skills needed to read and write. We have suggested that they give you more guidance on how to improve your work. We have also asked your teachers to ensure that all your lessons are as good as the best ones.

You have a part to play by working hard and encouraging everybody to do better each day. I wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Ian Hancock
Her Majesty's Inspector

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