

Connor Downs Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111847
Local Authority	Cornwall
Inspection number	363783
Inspection dates	22–23 June 2011
Reporting inspector	Grahame Sherfield HMI

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	167
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jeremy Ridge
Headteacher	Allan Lawrence
Date of previous school inspection	5 January 2008
School address	10 Mutton Hill Hayle TR27 5DH
Telephone number	01736753135
Fax number	01736753135
Email address	secretary@connor-downs.cornwall.sch.uk

Age group	4–11
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Royal Exchange Buildings
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M2 7LA

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 12 lessons and observed seven teachers. They held meetings with governors, staff and pupils and met some parents informally. Inspectors looked at key documents, such as the school's plans for improvement and the minutes of meetings of the governing body, as well as 82 questionnaires returned by parents and carers.

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

- How successfully the school has improved pupils' progress in English.
- How successfully the school has raised pupils' attendance.
- How well the curriculum supports the development of pupils' literacy skills.
- How effectively pupils' progress in the subjects of the curriculum is monitored and how staff contribute to this.
- How successfully the school has improved provision and outcomes in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Information about the school

Connor Downs is of smaller than average size and serves a mainly White British community in the village and the surrounding rural area. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational needs, is above average and the percentage known to be eligible for free school meals is increasing but remains below average.

The school has dyslexia friendly status, validated by the British Dyslexia Association.

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

Connor Downs is a good school. The headteacher and the staff provide a very caring and nurturing environment in which pupils flourish and feel very secure. Pupils' behaviour is outstanding and they make an excellent contribution to the school and the wider community. Parents and carers are exceptionally supportive of the school. One praised the 'caring ethos' while another noted that 'nothing is too much trouble' for the staff. These very positive views are representative of almost all parents and carers who returned the questionnaire and are similar to those of the inspection team.

Children get off to a good start and make good progress in the Reception Year as a result of the significantly improved provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Progress is also good in Key Stages 1 and 2. The school has successfully devoted much energy to improving progress in English, providing diverse and rich opportunities to support higher attainment in writing. Current Year 6 pupils have made much better progress in English than pupils last year and their attainment is above average. Mathematics is an established strength of the school, where attainment is also above average, with teachers' assessments indicating an impressive proportion reaching the higher Level 5.

Pupils' good overall progress is the result of the careful checking of the progress of individual pupils, better provision for literacy within an already good curriculum and good, and improving, teaching. Teachers mark work well and pupils understand and value the targets for improvement they are set. Occasionally, teachers are too dependent on expecting pupils to respond differently to tasks according to their level of attainment, rather than using different activities and materials that might address their individual learning needs more effectively. This sometimes results in slower progress than might be the case, particularly for higher attaining pupils. Although pupils' progress is carefully monitored, data are not used systematically enough to evaluate the impact of actions to raise their attainment at key points during the year.

The strong leadership of the headteacher and the school management team has established a widely shared commitment to continuous improvement. Self-evaluation is broadly accurate and results in clear and appropriate priorities for future action. Although not always reached, challenging targets contribute well to raising standards. Consequently, the capacity to improve further is good.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Continue to improve the quality of teaching and learning by securing a wider range of approaches in the classroom to meet pupils' individual learning needs, particularly the needs of those with higher levels of attainment.

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- Use the data collected on pupils' progress more effectively to monitor the progress of different groups and cohorts at key points during the year to check the impact of improvement activities.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils get on very well with each other and with the staff. They work well in lessons, both individually and in small groups, and make good progress from their generally average starting points. Pupils respond particularly well when they are invited to contribute ideas on what a good piece of work might be like. They also respond well to practical activities and to real experiences on which they can base their writing. This was clear, for example, in a Year 1 science lesson on forces, and in Year 5 and 6 pupils' diary entries based on an 'interview' experience the previous day. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make similar progress to their peers.

Pupils enjoy school and achieve well. They are polite, care for each other and listen to adults and their peers with respect. Pupils make an exceptional contribution to the life of the school, for example through the school and eco councils and in the range of responsibilities many take on. They have a good understanding of the importance of diet and exercise in a healthy lifestyle. After a slight dip last year, pupils' attendance is now above average. Taking this into account, together with their good skills in working collaboratively and independently and their above average attainment, pupils are well prepared for their future economic well-being.

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

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	2
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	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
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?

Lessons are planned well and activities are carefully designed to build on previous work and to support a brisk pace. The objectives underpinning the lessons are clear and teachers often check pupils' understanding, using good questions or assessing pupils' work quickly on small whiteboards. Marking provides a clear indication of how well pupils have addressed the objectives underpinning their work and how their work might be improved. Teaching assistants make a good contribution to supporting pupils' learning. The best teaching observed was characterised by activities that generated real excitement and where the purpose was clear. Where teaching was less strong, work was not sufficiently matched to pupils' needs and, occasionally, pupils were not pressed to articulate their ideas. Teachers' assessments are increasingly accurate as a result of the whole staff's careful consideration of samples of pupils' work. The progress of each individual pupil is carefully explored so that any necessary adjustment in the support and challenge provided can be made to promote better progress.

The curriculum meets pupils' needs well, with a strong emphasis on developing writing skills in cross-curricular topics, in literacy sessions and through additional help for those who need it. The school has worked with some success to improve boys' progress in English, carefully choosing books and contexts for writing. Provision for developing pupils' skills in numeracy and in information and communication technology is good. The programme for personal, social and health education is a strength and there has been

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good progress in establishing provision for gifted and talented pupils. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities and these are well attended.

The school provides an outstandingly nurturing environment where pupils feel confident in sharing any worries with staff. Pupils are well known by all staff and those in need of a little extra support and attention are very well cared for in the friendly atmosphere. The school monitors pupils' attendance carefully and works closely and successfully with parents and carers to improve attendance where necessary.

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	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The management team has effective systems for monitoring and evaluating the school's work, particularly in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. Approaches to developing the role of coordinators in monitoring other subjects are well considered. Plans for school improvement set out appropriate priorities clearly, although the anticipated impact of actions on pupils' progress is not always clear. The ambition to maintain the pace of improvement is widely shared and staff morale is high. The governing body gains good first-hand knowledge of the work of the school through an extensive programme of governors' visits that is now being linked with school improvement priorities. Governors are also provided with detailed information by the headteacher and other staff and are thus well placed to ask questions of the school management team.

The school works effectively to ensure that all groups of pupils fulfil their potential and strives to ensure that discrimination against any group is avoided at all times. It makes a good contribution to community cohesion, being itself a highly cohesive community with strong links with the local area. The school has a well-established link with a school in The Gambia and is starting to build a relationship with an establishment in a more multicultural area of the United Kingdom. The school has outstanding partnerships with a range of external organisations to extend the opportunities for pupils both in their work and in their personal development. Good examples of these are the multi-agency approaches used to support individual pupils and the many activities that help to enrich the curriculum. The school's arrangements for safeguarding are good, and all necessary policies are properly implemented.

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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	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
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	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children enjoy the Early Years Foundation Stage. They benefit from the well-established routines and expectations and their behaviour is very good. Children respond well to the adults, treat each other with care and respect and are well looked after in the safe and secure environment. The curriculum provides a wide range of learning experiences, with a good balance between adult-led and child-selected activities. The quality of questioning by staff to prompt children's learning and to provide them with opportunities to develop their speaking skills is good, but not consistently so. The learning environment has been improved, with attractive writing areas in the classroom and outdoors. The outdoor area makes a strong contribution to children's experience of a wide range of imaginative activities across all the areas of learning. However, the lack of a canopy constrains its use in bad weather.

By the end of the Reception Year, children reach levels of attainment that are above average and they have particular strengths in aspects of numeracy. Children's good progress is supported well by effective procedures for observation and assessment that are used well to devise activities to meet the children's needs. Staff hold frequent meetings to ensure that assessment is accurate and children's progress is documented well in the 'learning journey' documents. The good leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage, supported by well-developed teamwork among all the adults, has secured significant improvements. There is a good partnership with parents and carers, and links with the playgroup, from which most children join the school, are effective.

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

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These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

The very large majority of parents and carers who responded have positive views on all the aspects in the Ofsted questionnaire. All respondents said that they are happy with their children's enjoyment of school, how the school keeps them safe, the quality of its leadership and management and their children's experience at the school overall. Several other aspects were endorsed by almost all those who responded. These included the help given to parents and carers in supporting their children's learning and the way the school meets children's particular needs. Inspection evidence confirms these very positive views.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Connor Downs 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 82 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 167 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	59	72	23	28	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	69	84	13	16	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	51	62	27	33	4	5	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	45	55	31	38	5	6	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	48	59	28	34	1	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	49	60	31	38	2	2	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	49	60	27	33	3	4	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)	48	59	30	37	2	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	53	65	27	33	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	56	68	19	23	4	5	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	43	52	37	45	2	2	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	62	76	20	24	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	60	73	22	27	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

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 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.



24 June 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Connor Downs Primary School, Hayle TR27 5DH

Thank you for your involvement in the recent inspection, particularly for the friendly way in which you talked to us. We enjoyed visiting your school.

You go to a good school and we think you are right to be proud of it. Here are the main things we found out.

- You make good progress in your work, benefiting from good teaching, and you enjoy the good curriculum.
- Your behaviour is outstanding and you make an excellent contribution to the school and the wider community.
- Children in Reception get off to a good start.
- The school cares for you exceptionally well and you say that you feel very safe.
- The governors, the headteacher and the other staff have been successful in improving the school and are determined to make it even better.

There are two things we have asked the school to do to keep improving.

- Make sure all your teachers give you work which meets your needs by providing different activities or different materials, particularly for those of you who often find the work easy. You can help by doing your very best in response.
- Make more use of the information gathered about your progress so that teachers can be even more effective at helping you to do well.

Thank you again for your involvement in the inspection and we wish you every success for the future.

Yours sincerely

Grahame Sherfield Her Majesty's Inspector

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