

St Mellion Church of England Voluntary Aided School

St Mellion, Saltash, Cornwall, PL12 6RN

Inspection dates 10–11 July 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The number of children joining Reception varies hugely from year to year. Children make good progress in most areas of learning because activities are carefully planned to arouse their interest and develop their skills.
- Pupils in Years 1 and 2 attain well in reading, writing and mathematics, although their progress in writing is not as rapid because they do not have enough opportunities to link letters and the sounds they make with practical writing activities.
- By the end of Key Stage 2 the majority of pupils achieve well in reading, writing and mathematics because their needs are identified. For a minority of pupils progress in mathematics is not as rapid as for others.
- Teaching throughout the school is good, and most is planned carefully to provide tasks which meet the needs of the different groups in classes, which have wide spans of age and ability.
- Pupils feel safe at school; they say bullying is rare, which is confirmed by the school's records. Pupils' good behaviour is fostered by the caring ethos found in the school.
- Governors have a sound understanding of the school's performance as well as its priorities for improvement. This enables them to confidently hold the school to account.
- The headteacher monitors the work of the school closely, and has accurately identified its strengths and areas for development. Effective action has already been taken to improve progress in mathematics for some pupils, although she recognises there is more to be done.
- There is variation from year to year in pupils' attainment, which is due to the different composition of the very small cohorts as well as considerable numbers of pupils leaving and joining the school during each year.

It is not yet an outstanding school because:

- By the end of Key Stage 1 some pupils do not have a sound grasp of sounds and letters which hinders their ability to write fluently and independently.
- There is some variation in the rates of progress in mathematics for some pupils.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed teaching and learning in seven lessons, all of which were joint observations with the headteacher. She also made several shorter visits to the youngest class to observe the teaching of phonics (letters and the sounds they make).
- The inspector analysed the 19 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) as well as taking into account 15 responses on paper from parents and carers who could not access the site. She also spoke informally to some parents and carers on the playground.
- The inspector also took account of 12 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher and other members of staff, two members of the governing body including the Chair of the Governing Body, and a telephone conversation was held with a representative of the local authority.
- In addition, the inspector looked at examples of pupils' work in their books and on the walls.
- A range of documentation was scrutinised, including that relating to attainment and progress of pupils, performance management of staff, planning and monitoring of the school's activities including behaviour and attendance, and safeguarding.
- She held a meeting with a group of pupils, had a tour of the school with two Year 6 pupils, and listened to pupils from Years 1, 2, 5 and 6 read. She also spoke to pupils during lunchtime play.

Inspection team

Anne Newall, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a much smaller than average size primary school which has varying numbers of pupils in each year group. Pupils are taught in three classes: one for Reception and Years 1 and 2; one for Years 3 and 4; and another for Years 5 and 6.
- There is a much smaller than average proportion of pupils entitled to support from the pupil premium (which provides additional funding to the school for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and children in the care of the local authority).
- The proportion of disabled pupils, or those who have special educational needs supported with school action, school action plus, or with a statement of special educational needs, is much smaller than average.
- In 2012 the school met the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school joined another small school locally to form a Federation in January 2011, and the headteacher is executive headteacher of both. The governing body is responsible for both schools.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase progress and raise attainment in mathematics so that it matches the higher attainment in reading and writing by:
 - ensuring greater challenge in the tasks set for some pupils.
- Improve attainment in writing for pupils in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 by:
 - making more explicit the link between letters and the sounds they make, by providing pupils with more frequent opportunities to write independently.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- The majority of pupils make good progress and some pupils make outstanding progress from their individual starting points in reading, writing and mathematics. This is because the headteacher and staff have an in-depth knowledge of each pupil, and track their progress closely. Some pupils are not provided with enough challenge during mathematics lessons to ensure they make the progress of which they are capable.
- When children join school in Reception, they generally have the skills and abilities expected for their age, although this varies from year to year. They make good progress so that by the end of Reception their attainment in most of the areas of learning is similar to and sometimes better than expected for their age. However, a relatively weaker area is writing because not enough opportunities are provided for them to practise independently.
- The very few pupils who have special educational needs or disabilities are making at least good progress because the school has accurately identified their individual needs and provided appropriately for these.
- The very small proportion of pupils in school supported by the pupil premium funding are making good or better progress in English and mathematics, when compared to their classmates and all pupils nationally because the school carefully uses the funding to meet their differing needs. For example, it is used to provide additional one-to-one teaching, some emotional support, and the provision of additional teaching assistant time. It also enables some pupils to join in extra-curricular activities or visits. This is an example of how the school ensures all pupils have equal opportunities.
- Since the last inspection six years ago, overall attainment in English and mathematics measured by national tests at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 has been close to or above the national average apart from in 2012. This variation was mainly due to changes in cohorts caused by pupils joining and leaving the school. In Key Stage 1, attainment in writing, although slightly above the national average, has not consistently been as good as in reading and mathematics.
- The school's records show that across Key Stage 2 in 2012 the majority of pupils made good progress in reading and writing, but slightly less progress in mathematics by the end of Year 6. The headteacher identified this quickly and put into place steps to raise attainment and progress in mathematics across the school, which have already been effective in most year groups.
- At the time of this inspection, the school's teacher assessment data for the end of Year 2 and the end of Year 6 show that attainment is above average in all areas.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching across the school is typically good, with some examples of outstanding teaching. For example, in Years 5 and 6 English, a carefully structured lesson on poetry built on the pupils' previous learning and enabled them to produce high-quality verses based on *The Jabberwocky*. Phrases such as 'eyes of pure malice' showed the level of sophistication in their writing. The pupils' level of motivation was such that when their teacher said, 'I really want to get on with writing this poem, don't you?' there was a flurry of 'Yes!!!' from the class.
- In another poetry lesson, this time in the Years 3 and 4 class, pupils were motivated by their work on rainforest animals to produce interesting poetry, using alliteration and rhyme. Their enthusiasm was maintained because the work was pitched correctly, and by good use of questioning and praise from their teacher.
- Pupils joining the school are promptly assessed so that appropriate work is planned for them, thus enabling them to quickly adjust to their new school and make good progress.
- Teaching assistants make a good contribution to learning by teaching small groups as well as by supporting individual pupils.
- Most lessons proceed at a brisk pace which sustains the pupils' concentration, and lessons are

well planned to build on what the pupils have already learnt. Pupils in the youngest class had a wonderful time watching their snails racing. They had made their predictions about how far each snail could travel in three minutes, and set up the timer to check. Off went the snails, and up went the level of excitement. The teacher used targeted questioning to focus the pupils and used their answers to develop their vocabulary, such as 'prediction', 'turning', 'returning', 'faster' and 'slower'.

- In a few cases for the pupils in the Reception and Years 1 and 2 class, their writing tasks are not sufficiently well matched to their ability. They are either too demanding because pupils do not yet have the skills to cope, or not challenging enough for pupils who could achieve more work independently.
- Pupils are very clear about their individual targets for improvement, and the older pupils spoke eloquently about their aspirations, for example, 'I'm hoping to be a Level 5, because I was a high Level 4 last term and I've been practising.'
- Books are thoroughly marked by teachers, and marking often makes reference to the pupils' individual targets. The presentation of work in books is of a consistently good standard in Key Stage 2, but not all pupils can form letters correctly by the end of Key Stage 1 which affects the presentation of their work.
- Children in Reception get off to a good start because activities are provided which interest them, and because there is a good balance of indoor and outdoor activities providing plenty of scope for them to develop concentration and perseverance. They really enjoyed discussing why their model 'Titanic' boat had sunk overnight: 'It sunk because it got too heavy when the cardboard got wet.'

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Superb relationships between all staff and pupils are representative of the caring ethos which permeates the school.
- The children's behaviour is thoughtful and considerate, and they play well together at lunchtimes and playtimes.
- The vast majority of parents and carers who responded to the survey agreed that behaviour is good and that their children are well cared for and safe. All the staff who completed a questionnaire agreed strongly that pupils are safe.
- Pupils understand the different forms of bullying, including cyber bullying and racist bullying. They have been taught how to be careful when using the internet. They say there is hardly ever any bullying in school, which is confirmed by the school's records, but even if there was their teachers would quickly sort it out. The pupils develop a healthy respect for their own and others' safety, and are taught how to think sensibly about risk. For example, every pupil is taught to swim from Reception onwards. By the time they are in Key Stage 2 the school can confidently take pupils to the beach and for surfing lessons.
- Attendance has improved and is now above average due to regular reminders about good attendance in the newsletter.
- There are a few occasions when some of the younger pupils do not sustain interest in their tasks because they are either too difficult or not challenging enough, and as a result they disturb the learning of others.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher sets high expectations for the staff and pupils. She has the confidence of the vast majority of parents and carers, as well as all of the governors and staff. Several parents and carers who had transferred their children into the school wrote to say how pleased they are with the school. As one wrote, 'I always feel I know what is going on. Staff are approachable and helpful. I cannot sing the school's praises enough.' Another wrote, 'My children have thrived academically, socially and emotionally.' There is a parent-staff association which works hard to

raise funds to buy a range of items which benefit the pupils.

- Accurate analysis of each pupil's progress has led to strong improvements in both teaching and attainment, for example, in the teaching of mathematics, where there has already been an impact upon attainment although the headteacher knows there is more still to do.
- The curriculum is carefully planned to ensure pupils in mixed-age classes are able to achieve successfully. There is a wide range of interesting topics, which are enriched by visits and visitors. Much use is made of the outdoors, with its wooded area, allotment and well-resourced trim trail.
- The school makes an outstanding contribution to the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The strong links between the church, school and local community contribute to the pupils' sense of belonging and discrimination of any kind is not tolerated. Beyond the immediate community, pupils enjoy links with a French school. The oldest pupils develop responsibility and independence which ensures they are well prepared for the next phase of their education.
- This careful monitoring of each pupil has ensured that the school knows when to involve external agencies to get the help they need, for example speech and language therapists or educational psychologists.
- The whole staff and governors are involved each year in evaluating the work of the school and planning improvements for the following year. Pupil progress targets are set, which are linked closely to teachers' performance management, and which are carefully checked by the governing body.
- The local authority has kept an eye on the school and has given light touch support, which indicates its confidence in the school's ability to continue improving.
- There have been a number of improvements in recent years which indicate that the school has the capacity to improve further. Since this school federated with another local small school, pupils have benefited from opportunities to work alongside other children, and staff have gained from shared professional development. This year, the result has been improved academic standards. In addition, the amalgamation and reorganisation of the governing body have brought a wider range of skills and expertise which has enabled them to be more rigorous and challenging to the headteacher.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- The governing body is very knowledgeable about the work of the school, and because governors receive information about its performance in relation to schools locally and nationally, they are able to ask the headteacher pertinent questions. They have attended training to further develop their skills, for example in understanding assessment data. Governors know how and why the pupil premium funding was allocated, and know how the school tracks the achievement of eligible pupils. Governors know from the headteacher's regular reports, as well as from their own regular visits to school and contact with staff, how the strong focus upon improving teaching is resulting in better achievement for pupils. Governors receive reports from the headteacher regarding the performance management of teachers, and are fully aware that in future, salary progression will be determined by performance.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	112030
Local authority	Cornwall
Inspection number	412781

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	5–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	65
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Pam Lowther
Headteacher	Angela Palin
Date of previous school inspection	16 October 2007
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