

Pennycross Primary School

Arden Grove, Pennycross, Plymouth, PL2 3RL

Inspection dates 22–23 October 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Early years provision		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Pupils' attainment is below average at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2. Their fluctuating rates of progress, especially through Years 1 and 2, mean that pupils' achievement requires improvement.
- The quality of teaching and pupils' learning is inconsistent across the school. This is because teachers do not always set work and expectations at the level that challenges pupils and helps them to achieve their best.
- Pupils' basic writing and numeracy skills are not developed well enough as they move through the school.
- Teachers do not always ensure that pupils concentrate and this slows their progress. As a result, pupils' attitudes to learning requires improvement.
- Leaders' and governors' efforts to secure improvement have been impeded by changes in teaching staff since the previous inspection.
- Changes in staffing and improvements to teaching have not had sufficient time to secure consistently good teaching and pupil progress.

The school has the following strengths

- Leaders, including governors, work well as a team. They seek improvement with conviction and are taking well-considered steps to accomplish this.
- Children achieve well in the Early Years Foundation Stage because of consistently good teaching and support.
- All those who work at the school share a commitment to effectively meet pupils' personal needs. Staff are caring, and work diligently to keep pupils safe.
- Better phonics (sounds that letters make) teaching is beginning to improve pupils' reading and writing skills.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors visited 21 lessons and learning activities and were accompanied by the headteacher and deputy headteacher for some of these sessions.
- The inspectors observed morning and lunch breaks and also observed two assemblies. Inspectors visited the breakfast club and observed a ‘wake and shake’ physical activity, which took place at the beginning of the school day.
- Meetings were held with representative groups of pupils and many other pupils were spoken to during lessons and breaktimes.
- Inspectors met with governors and the lead inspector met with a representative of the local authority.
- The inspection team took account of 50 parents’ responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) in planning and undertaking the inspection. The inspectors also spoke informally with a number of parents as they brought and collected their children from school. The lead inspector held a telephone conversation with a parent. The inspectors also considered four letters from parents.
- Meetings were held with school staff, including senior and middle leaders. Thirty-three staff questionnaires were also received and considered.
- The inspectors observed the school’s work, and looked at a number of documents. These included the school’s own information and checks on pupils’ progress, planning documents and checks on the quality of teaching and learning.
- The inspectors also examined records relating to behaviour, attendance, and the safeguarding policy, procedures and practice. They also considered the school’s sports premium action plan.

Inspection team

Alex Baxter, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Jennifer Cutler	Additional Inspector
Wendy Marriott	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This school is an average-sized primary school.
- The majority of pupils attending the school are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of disabled pupils or those with special educational needs supported by school action is above average.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- A well above average proportion of pupils are supported by the pupil premium. This is additional government funding provided to give extra support to those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and to children who are looked after.
- The proportion of pupils entering or leaving the school at other than the normal times is above average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set out the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are accommodated in two Reception classes, which work closely together to provide the early years provision. The children start school on a full-time basis.
- The school has experienced significant changes in teaching staff since the previous inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and pupils' learning so that they are typically good or better, especially through Key Stage 1, by:
 - ensuring that pupils are provided with the right level of challenge to extend their understanding
 - setting consistently high expectations that ensure pupils engage more fully in their learning, especially to improve their basic literacy and numeracy skills
 - making sure that learning activities stimulate pupils' interest.
- Raise pupils' attainment and quicken their progress, particularly in English and mathematics, by:
 - Ensuring teachers regularly emphasise and develop pupils' handwriting, spelling and punctuation skills
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to use and apply basic numeracy skills to solve problems.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The supportive views of staff, governors and parents reflect their continuing appreciation of the headteacher's passionate leadership during a period of staffing instability. New staffing arrangements are helping the headteacher and senior leaders, including governors, to quicken the pace of improvement.
- Parents also welcome the school's well-established routines and diligence of staff in keeping pupils' safe. One family wrote, typically reflecting the views of others, 'We are so happy with the kindness and nurturing from all the teachers and staff.'
- Senior staff check teachers' performance and make sure that teachers' salaries link closely with the school's priorities for improving pupils' learning. Middle leaders make effective contributions to the school improvement plan, which accurately identifies where further improvements are needed. For example, as seen in the significantly strengthened early years provision, which had been in need of improvement at the previous inspection. The school's focus on basic literacy and numeracy is not strong enough to help pupils confidently develop these skills in Key Stage 1.
- The school is improving the way it records pupils' progress so that middle and other leaders can more readily check the impact of improvements in teaching are having on pupils' skills. Leaders recognise that some developments, including new class structures and additional adult support, have not been in place long enough to securely raise standards.
- The school's supportive work with parents and innovative use of rewards for good attendance have successfully raised pupils' attendance. The improved teaching of phonics, reading and writing introduced earlier this year is also strengthening pupils' skills.
- Leaders use additional government funding efficiently by employing extra teachers and teaching assistants to support disadvantaged pupils so that they make similar progress to other pupils.
- Leaders make sure that the new sports funding is used effectively to strengthen its already broad provision. In partnership with other schools, specialist coaches are used to improve staff and pupils' skills. Additional sports now include frisbee sessions, gymnastics and cross country running. Checks by leaders show pupils' improved enjoyment, fitness and participation in these activities.
- Leaders take an inclusive approach that enables the school to effectively help disabled pupils, those with special educational needs and pupils when they join from other schools. Staff are rigorous in tackling discrimination and in seeking to treat pupils equally. At times though, the most-able pupils are not challenged to reach the high standards they are capable of achieving.
- Leaders work with conviction to maintain a caring community that underpins pupils' good behaviour particularly during assemblies and lunch breaks. Occasionally pupils' behaviour for learning is not promoted consistently enough in lessons by teachers to secure pupils' best work.
- The school is effectively developing its approach to the new curriculum. It covers a range of topics that link subjects together. For example, First World War poetry is used to explore pupils' feelings and promote their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- School trips to the theatre and activities such as 'enterprise week' also increase pupils' readiness for life in modern Britain.
- The local authority plays a supportive role in helping to secure good teaching and learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage and by providing training for governors.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors work effectively with staff and fully support the school's inclusive approach. Governors enjoy close links with parents and complete training on a regular basis to keep their skills up to date. This enables governors to effectively fulfil their statutory duties and ensure that all pupils are appropriately safeguarded. Governors have provided unwavering support to the headteacher during a period of staffing instability. Governors manage the school's finances efficiently. They receive informative reports from the headteacher and make frequent visits to the school to consult staff and to see the work of the school for themselves. Governors hold the headteacher to account and check that staff pay and progression is linked to improved teaching. This process has contributed to the improvements made in the Early Years Foundation Stage since the previous inspection. Governors know how the school's academic performance compares with other schools. They have used this information to strengthen improvements in teaching particularly in Years 3 to 6. Governors oversee the use of additional government funds to support eligible disadvantaged pupils and check that extra teaching and support is given to pupils to make sure they make at least similar progress to other pupils.

The behaviour and safety of pupils**require improvement****Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. At times in some classes, teachers do not stimulate pupils' interest enough or secure their full involvement in learning and this slows their progress. Pupils generally work well together, especially when discussing ideas, but some are too reliant on adult support before they put sufficient effort into recording their work.
- The majority of pupils behave well in lessons and are keen to learn, especially where teaching is most effective.
- Pupils' behaviour is good when they learn and play outdoors and for those who attend breakfast club. Good behaviour is reflected in the school records, which show no racist incidents or exclusions in recent terms.
- Pupils are generous in praising others during assemblies, particularly when they receive their good behaviour, attendance awards and house points.
- Pupils look forward to going to school and enjoy being there. Parents who completed the online survey confirm that their children enjoy their time at school. The school has worked well with parents to improve pupils' attendance. As a result, attendance now matches the national average.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good.
- All staff work closely with parents and outside agencies. They apply clearly understood policies in order to keep pupils safe.
- Senior staff are zealous in making sure that all adults working in the school are appropriately checked and that child protection arrangements are supported by effective links with outside agencies.
- Staff manage behaviour well at break times. As a result, the pupils play together happily and conduct themselves around the school sensibly.
- Pupils feel safe and show consideration towards each other and to adults. They say it is easy to talk to staff and appreciate the level of understanding shown by adults.
- Pupils know how to stay safe and understand that bullying may take many forms, such as verbal and cyber bullying. Pupils appreciate and follow the guidance they receive from teachers about road safety and how to use computers and say that this helps them to keep safe.
- Pupils on the school council agree that there is some bullying, but it is dealt with firmly by adults. Pupils recognise that some new pupils take time to settle, but have confidence in the way staff are quick to support them.

The quality of teaching**requires improvement**

- Teaching requires improvement because it does not ensure that all pupils make good progress over time in all classes. The level of challenge presented to the pupils and the degree to which teachers keep them focused on their work fluctuate across the school, especially in Key Stage 1.
- Children learn well in Reception classes because consistent routines and expectations along with lively activities sustain their full participation in learning. Pupils in other classes also respond well when teachers set high expectations of them, especially when motivated by stimulating topics and relevant challenges.
- In a Year 6 lesson all pupils were moved when listening to First World War poems and responded thoughtfully to the teacher's questioning. Pupils' learning advanced even more as the teacher made links with pupils' own experiences and explored their ideas and feelings.
- Some good learning takes place in all classes, but at times pupils' learning is limited because they find the work too easy or because it does not stimulate their curiosity. When this happens pupils lose concentration and their learning stalls, unless supported directly by an adult.
- Teachers and teaching assistants encourage pupils to relate well towards each other. Adults also prompt pupils to share their ideas in lessons and this also boosts pupils' confidence and learning.
- Teaching assistants give good pastoral support to disabled pupils, those with special educational needs and pupils new to the school. However, occasionally some teachers' expectations of what pupils' can achieve are not high enough and this restricts and slows their learning.
- Pupils' achievement in reading has improved over the course of the year because there has been greater consistency in the teaching of phonics. Pupils' interest has been raised because teachers have set them clear expectations and introduced regular routines. Pupils have deepened their understanding of how

letter sounds blend together to make words. This has led to pupils' writing and spelling work also improving.

- Pupils' work in books shows that teachers are not always securing the basic skills of handwriting, grammar and punctuation well enough. As a result, some pupils, including the most-able, are not using their improved range of spoken vocabulary to enrich their writing. Weaker teaching in mathematics has resulted in inconsistency in the way pupils learn about numbers and develop their basic numeracy skills. As a result, some pupils are not able to use and apply their skills well enough to solve mathematical problems.

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Achievement requires improvement because pupils do not make enough good progress, especially in literacy and mathematics, as they move through the school.
- School checks on pupils' performance over the past year show that pupils make better progress in Years 3 to 6 compared to pupils in Years 1 and 2. As a result, while standards in national tests sometimes move close to the national average at the end of Year 6, they remain well below average at the end of Year 2.
- When children join the early years provision, their skills, knowledge and understanding are below those typical for their age. They are well supported by consistently good teaching and enjoyable learning activities and make good progress in all areas of learning.
- Across the school this year, more pupils are making better progress in reading and writing. As a result of improved teaching and learning of phonics pupils enjoy reading and are more confident to read unfamiliar words.
- In the Year 1 phonics screening check, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard was closer to the national average than in previous years. Pupils make better progress because their specific learning needs are well provided for, including disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, as well as pupils joining the school part way through their primary education.
- There is some improvement this year in the number of the most-able pupils attaining higher than expected standards in reading and English grammar. However, this is still low in relation to the national average and reflects the inconsistency in the level of challenge given to some of the most-able pupils who do not achieve as well as they should.
- Pupils receiving extra adult help provided through additional government funding often make better progress in mathematics and English. This is because adults give them personalised guidance to develop their basic skills. Better attendance is also helping to improve their achievement. As a result, the gaps in attainment with other pupils in the school has been narrowed to about a term's progress in English and to half a term in mathematics. Compared to other pupils nationally the gap is now about two terms in English and one term in mathematics.
- The progress of disadvantaged pupils currently varies between classes due to inconsistency in the quality of teaching. Consequently, the handwriting, spelling and punctuation and mathematical skills of some pupils require improvement.

The early years provision

is good

- Children make a good start and achieve well in the two Reception classes. Strong support from senior school leaders has improved the quality of teaching and children's learning since the previous inspection.
- Teachers have a strong focus on developing children's basic writing and phonics skills. As a result, most children achieve close to the good level of development expected for their age on entry into Year 1. Good teamwork between staff across the two Reception classes, which function as an early years unit ensures teaching is consistently good. Records of teachers' checks on children's learning and progress show that children of all abilities make good progress across all seven areas of learning.
- Staff work very closely with parents, helping them support their children's learning at home as well as at school. This has led to a high level of satisfaction from parents about the progress their children make. For example, one parent commented, reflecting the views of most, 'My child loves to come to school and is very happy.'
- Adults work effectively to keep pupils safe. They provide high levels of care and pastoral support for children. Consequently, children behave well and work hard to please adults. They make rapid progress in their personal, social and emotional development and in their physical development. Clear expectations and well-established routines promote children's self-confidence and their ability to find things out for

themselves.

- The school works closely with other early years providers to check the level of children's progress against national expectations. Teachers have worked in partnership with other subject specialists in local schools in order to plan stimulating activities that help children make better progress in developing their writing skills.

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	113297
Local authority	Plymouth
Inspection number	449316

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	273
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Carol Noden
Headteacher	Carol Waziri
Date of previous school inspection	30–31 March 2011
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