



Stithians Community Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 111851
Local Authority Cornwall
Inspection number 278795
Inspection date 27 November 2006
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 address	Church Road
School category	Community		Stithians
Age range of pupils	4-11		Truro TR3 7DH
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01209 860547
Number on roll (school)	177	Fax number	01209 861123
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Cath Cullen
		Headteacher	Louise Northern
Date of previous school inspection	1 June 2000		

Age group 4-11	Inspection date 27 November 2006	Inspection number 278795
--------------------------	--	------------------------------------

© Crown copyright 2006

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a small village school. Nearly all pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is lower than average. The proportion with learning difficulties or disabilities is slightly above the national average, as is the proportion of pupils with statements of special need. The attainment of children starting school is below, and sometimes well below, average. The school has a new headteacher who has been in post since September 2006.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school with several outstanding features. It is excellent at ensuring that all pupils derive a great deal of enjoyment from their learning. The 'enjoyment factor' is often apparent in lessons and activities throughout the school. The skilled approach of the staff in creating an ethos in which strong relationships and good humour flourish is a powerful recipe that results in pupils gaining much confidence and pride in their achievements. The school has good systems for supporting, guiding and caring for its pupils, including excellent provision for their pastoral care. As a result, pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness is outstanding. They gain a mature and self-motivated approach to learning as they move through the school. Pupils' behaviour is excellent and they feel safe and secure at all times. Good, and sometimes outstanding, teaching, along with the top-class work of the support staff, ensures pupils achieve well and reach above average standards by the time they leave Year 6. Pupils achieve slightly below average standards and achieve satisfactorily in Years 1 and 2. The school is working well to improve weaknesses identified in pupils' writing and mathematics in these year groups in order to make progress here as strong as in other parts of the school. As a result of good provision, children in the Foundation Stage get off to a good start in school and most reach the expected levels by the time they start Year 1. The school accurately recognises that weaknesses in its assessment systems, and the accuracy with which assessment information is used, are limiting the precision with which targets can be set to help pupils improve. Through its good curriculum provision, which includes an excellent range of extra activities, the school is very successful in broadening pupils' knowledge and boosting their interest in learning. In particular, projects set for the older pupils are very effectively fast tracking them towards gaining an excellent understanding about how to secure their future economic well-being. Good leadership and management, coupled with the excellent teamwork of the staff and governors, have helped the school move forward at a good pace. The new headteacher's excellent initiatives, for example to upgrade performance management systems and put a strong senior management team in place, mean the school is well placed to continue developing rapidly. She receives the very best support from key senior staff. Governors also work well and are fully involved in all aspects of the school's development. The school accurately analyses its own performance and has a clear view of strengths and weaknesses. Its improvement plans paint a picture of a school on the march towards exciting developments in the future.

What the school should do to improve further

- improve assessment systems and the precision with which assessment information is used to ensure that targets set to improve pupils' progress are as sharply defined as possible
- improve achievement and standards in Years 1 and 2 by improving pupils' work in writing and mathematics.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

The good grounding they receive in all areas of learning in the Foundation Stage sets children up well when they start school. Standards by the end of Year 2 were below average, as reflected by the 2005 national test results, but improved in 2006 to just below average, as a result of the school's initiatives to improve pupils' work in writing and mathematics. The 2006 results, current work and the school's assessment information confirm that pupils now make steady progress in this part of the school and their achievement is satisfactory. The school has correctly identified the need to continue its efforts to improve standards and pupils' achievement in writing and mathematics in Years 1 and 2. Pupils progress well in Years 3 to 6. Nonetheless, the school correctly identifies that refinements to its assessment systems are needed to help sharpen up the overall target setting and expectations for pupils in order to strengthen their achievement further.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

'I can't wait to go back at the end of the holidays ... we enjoy being with our friends and the staff are good fun to be with.' These views from Year 6 pupils very much sum up the atmosphere of sheer enjoyment found around the school and show why attendance rates are good. For example, in a Year 6 lesson seen, much laughter and enjoyment was evoked by the teacher's very humorous example of journalistic writing used to inspire pupils' own attempts. Pupils say that they have no qualms about seeking adult advice or support. Wide-ranging responsibilities given to pupils as they move up through the school, for example as members of the very active school council, mean that they develop excellent social awareness. The full involvement of pupils in charity fundraising and working with outside organisations gives them a strongly embedded understanding of the value of contributing to the immediate and wider community. Pupils gain a deep insight into understanding how to lead a healthy lifestyle through the wide range of sports activities and the school's strong focus on healthy eating.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Through their lively and enthusiastic approach, the school's knowledgeable team of teachers and support staff successfully promote good quality learning. Teachers often present activities in an interesting and humorous way that thoroughly engages all individuals and encourages them to work at their best. For example, references to 'Dr Who's Tardis' and 'The X Factor' within mathematics problem-solving work in a Year 2 lesson, brought the work to life and got pupils working at a rapid pace. Teaching assistants work in a seamless way as part of the classroom support mechanisms. They

skilfully teach small groups or support individuals and, in this way, strongly enhance pupils' learning. The school makes detailed assessments of pupils' attainment and progress. However, its systems for collating this information are too cumbersome and do not easily lend themselves to staff gaining a rapid overview of the performance and progress of individuals across the school. This, in turn, reduces the precision with which information gained can be used to sharpen up planning and specific targets for pupils' learning in lessons.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school adopts an imaginative and innovative approach towards developing a curriculum that enhances pupils' personal development and ensures they gain a broad range of skills, knowledge and understanding. For example, the provision of mixed age group activity sessions for pupils in Years 3 to 6 not only strongly promotes their skills in areas such as music, sports and religious education, but also boosts their personal development skills of supporting and socialising with each other across the age ranges. Excellent use is made of computers to enhance pupils' learning across the curriculum. Whilst provision is strong for the Foundation Stage, the school is right to identify that current outdoor facilities for this age group are in need of upgrading. The school links well with other providers to boost learning, for example through the use of sports coaches.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school adopts a vigilant approach to ensuring pupils' safety and well-being. All procedures are fully in place to ensure child protection. Staff are very knowledgeable about pupils' individual needs and provide outstanding support and encouragement for them. Pupils spoken to say that they trust staff fully and enjoy ... 'seeing how proud the staff are of our achievements during awards assemblies'. This ethos of trust, pride and enjoyment underpins all of the school's work and is fully cemented by the excellent relationships that are promoted between all members of the school community. All pupils have targets that they are working towards. However, the cumbersome nature of the school's assessment systems makes it difficult for teachers to define pupils' targets for improvement as sharply as they could do. This is potentially putting limitations on what might be expected of them and what they might achieve. The school is good at helping pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities. However, it has rightly identified that there is scope for improvement by targeting the support it has available even more precisely to the pupils who need it most.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The school benefits by having a strong team of staff and governors, who work very effectively together, are all fully focused on the main priorities for improvement and

have a very clear vision of where the school's future lies. Communication is excellent at all levels, with, for example, an exceedingly well maintained and informative school website that is very extensively used by all members of the school community. In a matter of a few months, the new headteacher has very successfully taken on the mantle of leadership, ensuring there is no let-up in the school's rapid development. There is a climate in which all staff and governors are keen to play their roles to the fullest extent in aiding school development. The school has good quality action plans to drive improvements forward – this has enabled it to sustain above average standards and good achievement for pupils by the time they leave Year 6. Also lots of good improvement has been made to the building and facilities to enhance pupils' learning. However, weaknesses in its assessment systems hamper the school's ability to project pupils' future performance and achievement precisely.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
---	-----------------------

Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

- I am writing to let you know how much I enjoyed coming to visit your school. Thank you for making me so welcome and helping me during the school's inspection. I think the school is doing a good job, and has some outstanding features. In particular, I think that the staff are especially good at making sure you enjoy your time in school. Here are some other things I noticed:
- as a result of the good and sometimes excellent work of your teachers, you achieve well in English, mathematics and science and you reach above average levels by the end of Year 6
- some of you told me that one of the best things about your school is the way in which staff make your lessons fun. I agree with you. Teaching assistants do a top quality job of supporting you in lessons
- your behaviour is excellent. You work with lots of enthusiasm in lessons and get on exceptionally well with staff and your friends
- you appreciate the excellent range of extra activities that the school provides for you
- the school does a good job of taking care of you so that you always feel safe
- your school is well led and managed so that it keeps improving and your headteacher and staff work really well together. I think your teachers are right in seeing that it is important to improve the systems they have for checking on your progress. They know that by making more precise use of the information they gain about your progress, they can design even better lessons and targets to help you improve. I have also suggested that they concentrate on helping those of you in Years 1 and 2 to make more improvements in your writing and mathematics work. Thank you again for being so helpful and friendly when I came to see you.