



Polruan Community Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 111883
LEA Cornwall
Inspection number 278801
Inspection dates 24 May 2006 to 24 May 2006
Reporting inspector George Logan AI

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	St Saviour's Hill
School category	Community		Polruan
Age range of pupils	4 to 11		Fowey, Cornwall PL23 1PS
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01726 870402
Number on roll	46	Fax number	01726 870161
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs Diana Skellern
Date of previous inspection	21 September 1999	Headteacher	Mrs Carol Wint

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

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Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The school's overall effectiveness is good, which is how the school views itself. It has some outstanding features in relation to pupils' care and the promotion of healthy lifestyles. Pupils' personal development is a significant strength, supported well by the rich curriculum. Pupils have a strong sense of their place within the local community. Their attitudes and behaviour are good. The agenda for change set by the headteacher has brought many improvements. A key priority has been to eliminate underachievement, particularly among younger pupils, and raise standards further. This has been successful, with good progress now evident in Years 1 and 2, as a result of improved assessment, higher expectations and the current focus on writing. Standards by the end of Year 2 are now broadly average. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 continue to make good progress as a result of consistently good teaching and effective use of target-setting. Standards in the present Year 6 are average because a significant proportion of the group have learning difficulties. However, pupils' handwriting across the school needs to be improved. Children in the current Reception group will meet or exceed the expected goals, although overall provision is satisfactory because limited classroom space and storage constraints mean that children require adult support to initiate and sustain almost all activities. This restricts their opportunities to develop independence. The school is well led and managed. School leaders strive constantly for improvement. Governors are effective and parents are actively involved. Self-evaluation is rigorous, accurately identifying key areas for improvement. The school has successfully tackled the issues raised at the last inspection and the capacity for further improvement is good. The school provides good, and improving, value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the standard of pupils' handwriting across the school.
- Develop pupils' skills of independent working in the Reception class.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils' achievement is good. Recent initiatives have accelerated pupils' progress right across the school, especially in writing. However, the school has not yet successfully tackled the poor quality of pupils' handwriting. Children enter the Reception group with skills similar to most children of their age, although there is some yearly variation because each group is so small, and make good progress in all areas. As a result, this year all the children will have achieved the expected goals, and a minority will exceed them, by the time they enter Year 1. For the last three years, national test results for Year 2 pupils have been below average. However, higher expectations of pupils' achievement in each subject, together with a close focus on improving writing, have significantly boosted pupils' progress. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 are now making good progress, particularly in writing and mathematics. As a result, standards in Year 2 are

now broadly average, with some pupils working at the higher Level 3. Effective deployment of adults to support small groups across the school contributes well to the good progress, particularly of those with learning difficulties. Pupils continue to make good progress in Years 3 to 6, and the drive to increase achievement has also had a positive influence in these year groups. Standards in the current Year 6 are average overall, reflecting the characteristics of this small group. However, many of these pupils are working at the higher Level 5 and challenging targets for the current year are likely to be exceeded.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development is good. They behave well and attitudes to learning are good. Most pupils have good attendance and the school takes effective action to encourage those few pupils who attend school less regularly to come more often. Pupils enthusiastically embrace the many opportunities offered. Very good relationships among pupils and adults reflect the school's strong family ethos. All older pupils have positions of responsibility in school, which contribute to its smooth running. Pupils' personal development in Years 3 and 4 is enhanced by opportunities to work alongside pupils from other small schools. These occasions encourage cooperation and the development of leadership skills, so preparing them well for adult life. In Reception, however, children's independence in initiating and sustaining activities is not sufficiently well developed. Pupils have a strong sense of their place in the village community and organise fund-raising events. Pupils' anxieties about the move to secondary education are allayed by a carefully planned induction programme. They learn successfully how to stay safe, using a worry box to communicate any concerns. The school's support for the development of healthy lifestyles is outstanding and central to its ethos. Pupils are consulted on the school lunch menu and have many opportunities for physical activity. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They have a very good understanding of right and wrong, and support many national charities. Their awareness of other cultures and traditions has improved and now matches their good knowledge of their own culture.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. This is particularly so in Years 3 to 6, where the teaching is brisk and purposeful and pupils are making especially good progress. Teachers and support staff are deployed well to ensure that teaching groups are small. As a result, work is closely matched to individual need. The contribution of experienced teaching assistants has proved invaluable in supporting pupils with learning difficulties. High expectations and challenging targets are having a positive effect on pupils' performance, particularly in writing. The quality of marking has improved, giving pupils clear pointers as to how they can improve. Pupils are engaged by lively teaching and

respond readily. Although progress in the past has been less brisk in the lower school, higher expectations are beginning to spur pupils on, so that progress has increased considerably. Across the school, teachers make effective use of laptop computers and whiteboards, and this is motivating for pupils.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is now good. Pupils' opportunities are significantly enriched by a varied programme of extra-curricular activities and visits, which are exceptional for such a small school. From Reception onwards, all pupils have the chance to swim, for example, and all take part in residential visits. The school makes creative use of its dramatic location and environment to enrich classroom work and is closely involved in village activities, including the annual Harbour Swim. Astute deployment of staff allows some specialist teaching, including music and French. The use of additional teaching and support staff to split the larger classes, particularly in literacy and numeracy, ensures that the curriculum is adapted well for the needs of the range of pupils within each class. More effective teaching of writing is consolidating the successful promotion of literacy skills, and pupils now have more opportunities to write at length. Problem solving skills are developed effectively in mathematics and this initiative is having a positive effect on pupils' achievement. The curriculum for Reception aged children is satisfactory. All areas of learning are covered satisfactorily, with some strengths. However, space constraints mean that children require a high level of adult support to access and use resources and this inhibits the development of their independence. Teaching of information and communication technology (ICT) has improved significantly. ICT is used increasingly well in other subjects. The programme for personal, social and health education is comprehensive.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The care, guidance and support for pupils are outstanding. Parents are strongly appreciative of the commitment that staff show towards their children. In this small community individuals know each other well and are valued. Pupils say they feel very secure and know that they will always be supported if in difficulties. Staff go to considerable lengths to help pupils with particular needs. Individuals with learning difficulties are supported particularly well by capable support staff. Child protection procedures are effective and there is a rigorous approach to health and safety. There are good procedures to help Reception age children to settle in quickly. School staff have worked with pre-school colleagues to ensure greater consistency of approach to the development of basic skills. Although a weakness in the past, effective assessment procedures now ensure that pupils' progress is closely tracked. This approach is contributing strongly to the improved progress of pupils in Years 1 and 2 and the accelerating progress of those in Years 3 to 6. All pupils have individual targets, which are regularly reviewed and shared with parents. Older pupils can evaluate their own progress with some accuracy.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher provides strong direction and a very clear agenda for improvement. She has created a united and committed staff and has been well supported by parents throughout the reorganisation of the school from three to two classes and extensive refurbishment. The pace of improvement has been good and demonstrates that the school has a good capacity to move forward briskly. Most aspects of the school's provision have strengthened significantly. These improvements are accelerating progress, although they have not yet had time to have a full impact on standards. Accurate self-evaluation takes into account the views of pupils and parents and firmly directs the planning of key areas for improvement. Close links with other very small schools enable staff to share good practice and draw on the skills of others. Governance is good. Governors play a full part in monitoring and evaluating the quality of provision and are very committed to the school. All subject leaders have had opportunities for evaluating pupils' learning through lesson observations. Pupils' writing has been the principal focus recently, tackled through participation in a national leadership programme. Rising standards in writing indicate that this initiative has been effective. The school's finances are managed well, sustaining a surplus in line with the recommended level, while investing shrewdly in the improvement of facilities and resources, particularly in ICT.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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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	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	3	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	3	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	NA

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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

It was a pleasure to spend a little time with you earlier in the week. I enjoyed watching you work and having the chance to meet some of you – particularly the school council who talked to me so enthusiastically. I have lots of reasons to remember my day. One is that I cannot think of a school I have ever visited with such a wonderful setting. It was also the wettest day I can recall for quite a long time – and, for me, the first school I have travelled to by ferry!

There are lots of good things about the school. Your attitudes to work are good – you listen carefully and are keen to answer questions. Your writing is coming on well, although work is sometimes untidy and the school has been asked to help you improve your handwriting. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 are learning faster than they were, while those of you in Years 3 to 6 are making consistently good progress. The school is being asked to make sure that children in Reception learn to work with some more independence. You are using the new laptops well to make your learning interesting.

I was impressed by how secure you feel, how considerate you are to each other and how much you enjoy school life. You really appreciate the opportunities you have to take part in village activities, to go on visits and to have experiences which many other children do not have because of where you live – although I do not think that I would be brave enough to take part in the Harbour Swim! I particularly liked the new raised flower beds which you were involved in building. They really make the playground interesting. Above all, I have been impressed by the efforts that all the adults have made to improve the school in the last few years. You recognise this too. I hope that everyone will continue to work to make sure that the school becomes even better.

Once again, thank you for welcoming me to Polruan.

With all good wishes George Logan Lead Inspector